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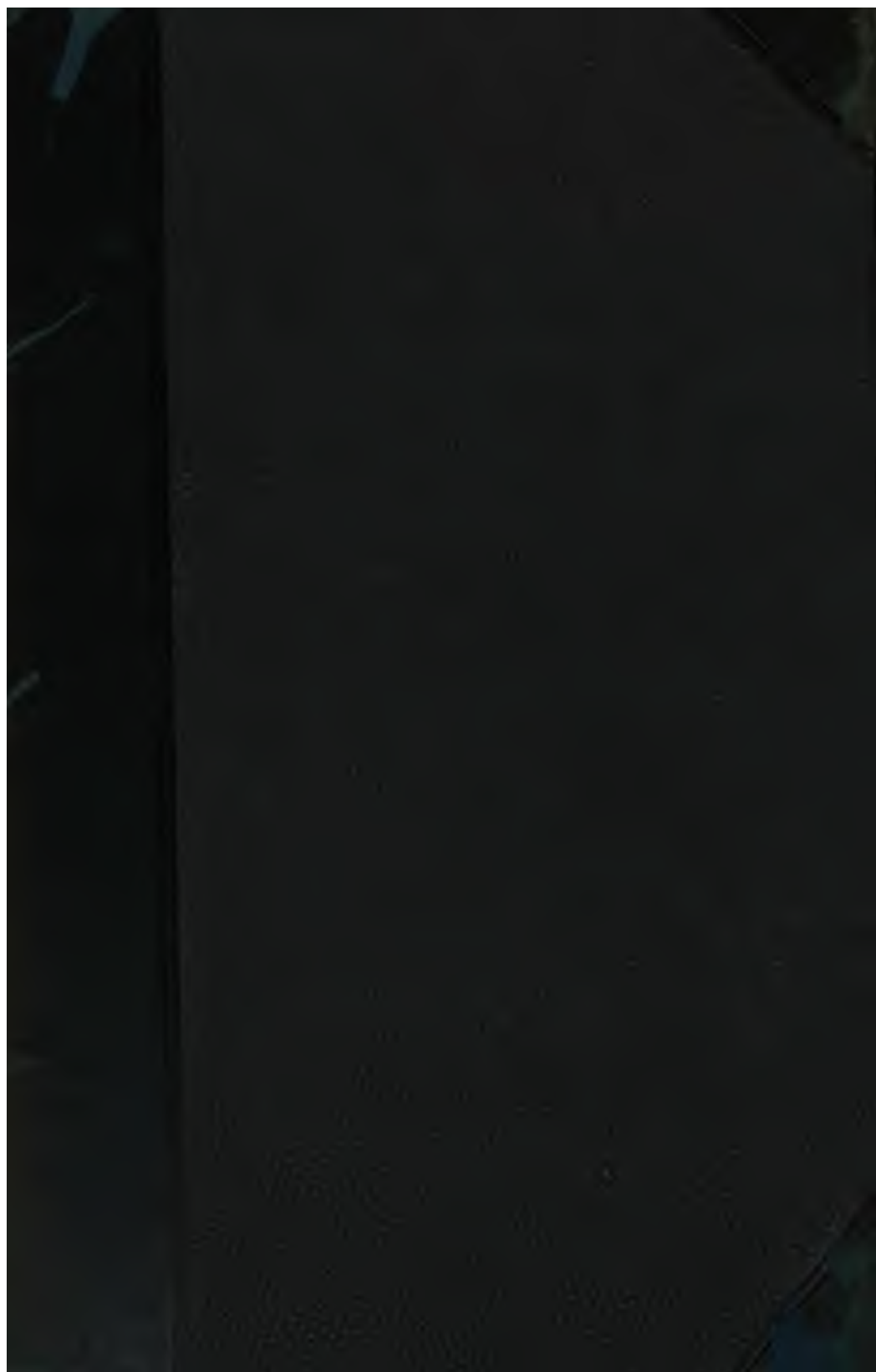
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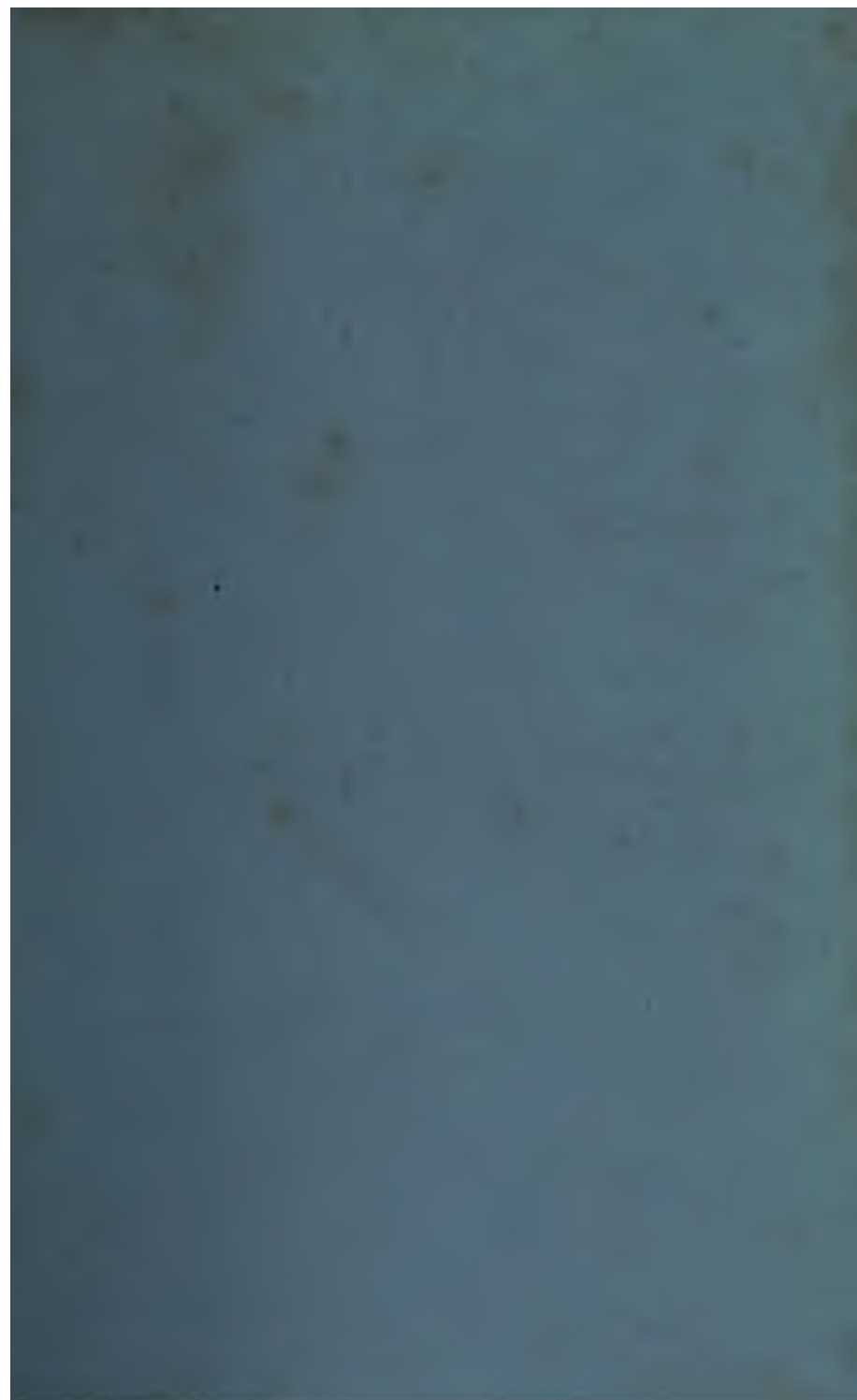
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BELGRAVIA

AN

Illustrated London Magazine

VOL. XXXVII.

NOVEMBER 1878 TO FEBRUARY 1879



London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1879

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LONDON : PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

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BELGRAVIA.

NOVEMBER 1878.

The Return of the Native.

BY THOMAS HARDY.

BOOK V.—CHAPTER V.

AN OLD MOVE INADVERTENTLY REPEATED.

CHARLEY'S attentions to his former mistress were unbounded. The only solace to his own trouble lay in his attempts to relieve hers. Hour after hour he considered her wants: he thought of her presence there with a sort of gratitude, and, while uttering imprecations on the cause of her unhappiness, in some measure blessed the result. Perhaps she would always remain there, he thought, and then he would be as happy as he had been before. His dread was lest she should think fit to return to Alderworth; and in that dread his eyes, with all the inquisitiveness of affection, frequently sought her face when she was not observing him, as he would have watched the head of a stock-dove to learn if it contemplated flight. Having once really succoured her, and possibly preserved her from the rashest of acts, he mentally assumed in addition a guardian's responsibility for her welfare.

For this reason he busily endeavoured to provide her with pleasant distractions, bringing home curious objects which he found in the heath, such as white trumpet-shaped mosses, red-headed lichens, stone arrow-heads used by the old tribes on Egdon, and faceted crystals from the hollows of flints. These he deposited on the premises in such positions that she should see them as if by accident.

A week passed, Eustacia never going out of the house. Then she walked into the enclosed plot and looked through her grandfather's spy-glass as she had been in the habit of doing before her marriage. One day she saw, at a place where the high road crossed the distant valley, a heavily-laden waggon passing along. It was piled with household furniture. She looked again and again, and recognised it to be her own. In the evening her

grandfather came indoors with a rumour that Yeobright had removed that day from Alderworth to the old house at Blooms-End.

On another occasion, when reconnoitring thus, she beheld two female figures walking in the vale. The day was fine and clear, and the persons being not more than half-a-mile off she could see their every detail with the telescope. The woman walking in front carried a white bundle in her arms, from one end of which hung a long appendage of drapery; and when the walkers turned, so that the sun fell more directly upon them, Eustacia could see that the object was a baby. She called Charley, and asked him if he knew who they were, though she well guessed.

‘Mrs. Wildeve and the nurse-girl,’ said Charley.

‘The nurse is carrying the baby?’ said Eustacia.

‘No, ’tis Mrs. Wildeve carrying that,’ he answered, ‘and the nurse walks behind carrying nothing.’

The lad was in good spirits that day, for the fifth of November had again come round, and he was planning yet another scheme to divert her from her too absorbing thoughts. For two successive years his mistress had seemed to take pleasure in lighting a bonfire on the bank overlooking the valley; but this year she had apparently quite forgotten the day and the customary deed. He was careful not to remind her, and went on with his secret preparations for a cheerful surprise, the more zealously that he had been absent last time and unable to assist. At every vacant minute he hastened to gather furze-stumps, thorn-tree roots, and other solid materials from the adjacent slopes, hiding them from cursory view.

[The evening came, and Eustacia was still seemingly unconscious of the anniversary. She had gone indoors after her survey through the glass, and had not been visible since. As soon as it was quite dark, Charley began to build the bonfire, choosing precisely that spot on the bank which Eustacia had chosen at previous times.

When all the surrounding bonfires had burst into existence, Charley kindled his, and arranged its fuel so that it should not require tending for some time. He then went back to the house, and lingered round the door and windows till she should by some means or other learn of his achievement, and come out to witness it. But the shutters were closed, the door remained shut, and no heed whatever seemed to be taken of his performance. Not liking to call her, he went back and replenished the fire, continuing to do this for more than half an hour. It was not till his stock of fuel had greatly diminished that he went to the back door and sent in to beg that Mrs. Yeobright would open the window-shutters and see the sight outside.

Eustacia, who had been sitting listlessly in the parlour, started up at the intelligence, and flung open the shutters. Facing her on the bank blazed the fire, which at once sent a ruddy glare into the room where she was, and overpowered the candles.

‘Well done, Charley!’ said Captain Drew from the chimney-corner. ‘But I hope it is not my wood that he’s burning Ah, it was this time last year that I met with that man Venn, bringing home Thomasin Yeobright—to be sure it was! Well, who would have thought that girl’s troubles would have ended so well? What a snipe you were in that matter, Eustacia! Has your husband written to you yet?’

‘No,’ said Eustacia, looking vaguely through the window at the fire, which just then so much engaged her mind that she did not resent her grandfather’s blunt opinion. She could see Charley’s form on the bank, shovelling and stirring the fire; and there flashed upon her imagination some other form which that fire might call up.

She left the room, put on her garden-bonnet and cloak, and went out. Reaching the bank, she looked over with a wild curiosity, when Charley said to her with a pleased sense of himself, ‘I made it o’ purpose for you, ma’am.’

‘Thank you,’ she said hastily. ‘But I wish you to put it out now.’

‘It will soon burn down,’ said Charley, rather disappointed. ‘Is it not a pity to knock it out?’

‘I don’t know,’ she musingly answered.

They stood in silence, broken only by the crackling of the flames, till Charley, perceiving that she did not want to talk to him, moved reluctantly away.

Eustacia remained within the bank looking at the fire, intending to go indoors, yet lingering still. Had she not by her situation been inclined to hold in indifference all things honoured of the gods and of men, she would probably have come away. But her state was so hopeless that she could play with it. To have lost is less disturbing than to wonder if we may possibly have won; and Eustacia could now, like other people at such a stage, take a standing-point outside herself, observe herself as a disinterested spectator, and think what a sport for Heaven this woman Eustacia was.

While she stood, she heard a sound. It was the splash of a stone in the pond.

Had Eustacia received the stone full in the bosom her heart could not have given a more decided thump. She had thought of the possibility of such a signal in answer to that which had

been unwittingly given by Charley; but she had not expected it yet. How prompt Wildeve was! Yet, how could he think her capable of deliberately wishing to renew their assignations now. An impulse to leave the spot, a desire to stay, struggled within her; and the desire held its own. More than that it did not do, for she refrained even from ascending the bank and looking over. She remained motionless, not disturbing a muscle of her face or raising her eyes; for were she to turn up her face, the fire on the bank would shine upon it, and Wildeve might be looking down.

There was a second splash into the pond.

Why did he stay so long without advancing and looking over? Curiosity had its way: she ascended one or two of the earth steps in the bank, and glanced out.

Wildeve was before her. He had come forward after throwing the last pebble, and the fire now shone into each of their faces from the bank stretching breast-high between them.

‘I did not light it!’ cried Eustacia quickly. ‘It was lit without my knowledge. Don’t, don’t come over to me!’

‘Why have you been living here all these days without telling me? You have left your home. I fear I am something to blame in this.’

‘I did not let in his mother; that’s how it is!’

‘You do not deserve what you have got, Eustacia; you are in great misery; I see it in your eyes, your mouth, and all over you. My poor, poor girl!’ He stepped over the bank. ‘You are beyond everything unhappy!’

‘No, no! not exactly——’

‘It has been pushed too far—it is killing you; I do think it.’

Her usually quiet breathing had grown quicker with his words. ‘I—I——’ she began, and then burst into quivering sobs, shaken to the heart by the unexpected voice of pity—a sentiment whose existence in relation to herself she had almost forgotten.

This outbreak of weeping took Eustacia herself so much by surprise that she could not leave off, and she turned aside from him in some shame, though turning hid nothing from him. She sobbed on desperately; then the outpour lessened, and she became quieter. Wildeve had stood without speaking.

‘Are you not ashamed of me, who used never to be a crying animal?’ she asked in a weak whisper as she wiped her eyes. ‘Why didn’t you go away? I wish you had not seen quite all that; it reveals too much by half.’

‘You might have wished it because it makes me as sad as you,’ he said with emotion and with deference. ‘As for revealing—the word is impossible between us two.’

'I did not send for you—don't forget it, Damon ; I am in pain, but I did not send for you.'

'Never mind—I came. Oh, Eustacia, forgive me for the harm I have done you in these two past years! I see more and more that I have been your ruin.'

'Not you. This place I live in.'

'Ah! your generosity may naturally make you say that. But I am the culprit. I should either have done more, or nothing at all.'

'In what way?'

'I ought never to have hunted you out; or, having done it, I ought to have persisted in marrying you. But of course I have no right to talk of that now. I will only ask this: Can I do anything for you? Is there anything on the face of the earth that a man can do to make you happier than you are at present? If there is, I will do it. You may command me, Eustacia, to the limit of my influence: and don't forget that I am richer now. Surely something can be done to save you from this! Such a rare plant in such a wild place, it grieves me to see. Do you want anything bought? Do you want to go anywhere? Do you want to escape the place altogether? Only say it, and I'll do anything to put an end to those tears, which but for me would never have been at all.'

'We are each married to another person,' she said faintly; 'and assistance from you, however correct, would have an evil sound.'

'Well, there's no preventing slanderers from having their fill at any time; but, as there will be no evil in it, you need not be afraid. I believe I am now a sobered man; and whatever I may feel, I promise you on my word of honour never to speak to you about—what might have been. Thomasin is helplessly dependent on me now; and I know my duty to her quite as well as I know my duty to you as a woman unfairly treated. I will assist you without prejudice to her. What shall I assist you in?'

'In getting away from here.'

'Where do you wish to go to?'

'I have a place in my mind. If you could help me as far as Budmouth I can do all the rest. Steamers sail from there. Yes,' she pleaded earnestly; 'help me to get to Budmouth harbour without my grandfather's or my husband's knowledge, and I can do all the rest.'

'Will it be safe to leave you there alone?'

'Yes, yes. I know Budmouth well.'

'Then let me know when you wish to go. We shall be at our

present house till December; after that we remove to Southerton. Command me in anything till that time.'

'I will think of this,' she said hurriedly. 'Whether I can honestly make use of you as a friend—that is what I must ask myself. If I wish to go, and decide to accept your assistance, I will signal to you some evening at eight o'clock punctually, and this will mean that you are to be ready with a horse and trap at twelve o'clock the same night to drive me to Budmouth harbour in time for the morning boat.'

'I will look out every night at eight, and no signal shall escape me.'

'Now please go away. I can only meet you once more under any circumstances, and that will be if I decide on this escape. After that I shall never see you again; and you must do your best to forget an unhappy exile. Go—I cannot bear it longer. Go—go.'

Wildevé slowly went up the steps, and descended on the other side; and as he walked he glanced back, till the bank blotted out her form from his further view.

CHAPTER VI.

THOMASIN ARGUES WITH HER COUSIN, AND HE WRITES A LETTER.

YEOBRIGHT was at this time at Blooms-End, hoping that Eustacia would return to him. The removal of furniture had been accomplished only that day, though Clym had lived in the old house for more than a week. He had spent the time in working about the premises, sweeping leaves from the garden paths, cutting dead stalks from the flower-beds, and nailing up creepers which had been displaced by the autumn winds. He took no particular pleasure in these deeds, but they formed a screen between himself and despair. Moreover, it had become a religion with him to preserve in good condition all that had lapsed from his mother's hands to his own.

During these operations he was constantly on the watch for Eustacia. That there should be no mistake about her knowing where to find him he had ordered a notice-board to be affixed to the garden gate at Alderworth, signifying in white letters whither he had removed. When a leaf floated to the earth he turned his head, thinking it might be her footfall. A bird searching for worms in the mould of the flower-beds sounded like her hand on the latch of the gate; and at dusk, when soft strange ventriloquisms came from holes in the ground, hollow stalks, curled dead leaves, and other crannies wherein breezes, worms, and insects

can work their will, he fancied that they were Eustacia standing without and breathing wishes of reconciliation.

Up to this time he had persevered in his resolve not to invite her back. At the same time, the severity with which he had treated her lulled the sharpness of his regret for his mother, and awoke some of his old solicitude for his mother's supplanter. Harsh feelings produce harsh usage, and this by reaction quenches the sentiments that gave it birth. The more he reflected, the more he softened. But to look upon his wife as innocence in distress was impossible, though he could ask himself whether he had given her quite time enough—if he had not come a little too suddenly upon her on that sombre morning?

Now that the first flush of his anger had paled, he was disinclined to ascribe to her more than an indiscreet friendship with Wildeve, for there had not appeared in her manner the signs of dishonour. So that the absolutely dark character of her deed could scarcely be maintained after making such an admission as this.

On the evening of the fifth of November his thoughts of Eustacia were intense. Echoes from those past times when they had exchanged tender words all the day long came like the diffused murmur of a sea-shore left a mile behind. 'Surely,' he said, 'she might have brought herself to communicate with me before now.'

Instead of remaining at home that night, he determined to go and see Thomasin and her husband. If he found opportunity he would allude to the chief cause of the separation between Eustacia and himself, keeping silence on the fact that there was a third person in the house when his mother was turned away. If it proved that Wildeve was innocently there, he would doubtless openly mention it. If he were there with unjust intentions, Wildeve, being a man of quick feeling, might possibly say something to reveal the extent to which Eustacia was compromised.

But on reaching his cousin's house he found that only Thomasin was at home, Wildeve being at that time on his way towards the bonfire unwittingly lit by Charley at Mistover. Thomasin, then as always, was glad to see Clym, and took him to inspect the sleeping baby, carefully screening the candlelight from the infant's eyes with her hand.

'Tamsin, have you heard that Eustacia is not with me now?' he said when they had sat down again.

'No,' said Thomasin, alarmed.

'And not that I have left Alderworth?'

'No. I never hear tidings from Alderworth unless you bring them. What is the matter?'

Clym in a disturbed voice related to her his visit to Susan

Nunsuch's boy, the revelation he had made, and what had resulted from his charging Eustacia with having wilfully and heartlessly done the deed. He suppressed all mention of Wildeve's presence with her.

'All this, and I not knowing it!' murmured Thomasin in an awestruck tone. 'Terrible! What could have made her—O Eustacia! And when you found it out you went in hot haste to her? Were you too cruel?—or is she really so wicked as she seems?'

'Can a man be too cruel to his mother's enemy?'

'I can fancy so.'

'Very well, then—I'll admit that he can. But now what is to be done?'

'Make it up again—if a quarrel so deadly can ever be made up. I almost wish you had not told me. But do try to be reconciled. There are ways, after all, if you both wish to.'

'I don't know that we do both wish to make it up,' said Clym. 'If she had wished it, would she not have sent to me by this time?'

'You seem to wish to, and yet you have not sent to her.'

'True; but I have been tossed to and fro in doubt if I ought, after such strong provocation. To see me now, Thomasin, gives you no idea of what I have been; of what depths I have descended to in these few last days. Oh, it was a bitter shame to shut out my mother like that! Can I ever forget it, or even agree to see her again?'

'She might not have known that anything serious would come of it, and perhaps she did not mean to keep aunt out altogether.'

'She says herself that she did not. But the fact remains that keep her out she did.'

'Believe her sorry, and send for her.'

'How if she will not come?'

'It will prove her guilty, by showing that it is her habit to nourish enmity. But I do not think that for a moment.'

'I will do this: I will wait a day or two longer—not longer than two days, certainly—and if she does not send to me in that time I will indeed send to her.—I thought to have seen Wildeve here to-night. Is he from home?'

Thomasin blushed a little. 'No,' she said. 'He is merely gone out for a walk.'

'Why didn't he take you with him?—the evening is fine. You want fresh air as well as he.'

'Oh, I don't care for going anywhere; besides, there is baby.'

'Yes, yes. Well, I have been thinking whether I should not consult your husband about this as well as you,' said Clym steadily.

‘I fancy I would not,’ she quickly answered. ‘It can do no good.’

Her cousin looked her in the face. No doubt Thomasin was ignorant that her husband had any share in the events of that tragical afternoon; but her countenance seemed to signify that she concealed some suspicion or thought of the reputed tender relations between Wildevé and Eustacia in days gone by.

Clym, however, could make nothing of it, and he rose to depart more in doubt than when he came.

‘You will write to her in a day or two?’ said the young woman earnestly. ‘I do so hope the wretched separation may come to an end.’

‘I will,’ said Clym: ‘I don’t rejoice in my present state at all.’

And he left her, and climbed the hills to Blooms-End. Before going to bed he sat down and wrote the following letter:—

My dear wife Eustacia,—I must obey my heart without consulting my reason too closely. Will you come back to me? Do so, and the past shall never be mentioned. I was too severe; but, O Eustacia, the provocation! You don’t know, you never will know, what those words of anger cost me which you drew down upon yourself. All that an honest man can promise you I promise now, which is that from me you shall never suffer anything on this score again. After all the vows we have made, Eustacia, I think we had better pass the remainder of our lives in trying to keep them. Come to me, then, even if you reproach me. I have thought of your sufferings that morning on which I parted from you; I know they were genuine, and they are as much as you ought to bear. Our love must still continue. Such hearts as ours would never have been given us but to be concerned with each other. I could not ask you back at first, Eustacia, for I was unable to persuade myself that he who was with you was not there as a lover. But if you will come, and explain distracting appearances, I do not question that you can show your honesty to me. Why have you not come before? Do you think I will not listen to you? Surely not, when you remember the kisses and vows we exchanged under the summer moon. Return, then, and you shall be warmly welcomed. I can no longer think of you to your prejudice—I am but too much absorbed in justifying you.

Your husband as ever,
CLYM.

‘There,’ he said, as he laid it in his desk, ‘that’s a good thing done. If she does not come before to-morrow night I will send it to her.’

Meanwhile, at the house he had just left, Thomasin sat sighing uneasily. Fidelity to her husband had that evening induced her to conceal all suspicion that Wildevé’s interest in Eustacia had not ended with his marriage. But she knew nothing positive, and though Clym was her well-beloved cousin there was one nearer to her still.

When, a little later, Wildevé returned from his walk to Mist-

over, Thomasin said, 'Damon, where have you been? I was getting quite frightened, and thought you had fallen into the river. I dislike being in the house by myself.'

'Frightened?' he said, touching her cheek as if she were some domestic animal. 'Why, I thought nothing could frighten you. It is that you are getting proud, I am sure, and don't like living here since we have risen above our business. Well, it is a tedious matter, this getting a new house; but I couldn't have set about it sooner, unless our ten thousand pounds had been a hundred thousand, when we could have afforded to despise caution.'

'No—I don't mind waiting—I would rather stay here twelve months longer than run any risk with baby. But I don't like your vanishing so in the evenings. There's something on your mind—I know there is, Damon. You go about so gloomily, and look at the heath as if it were somebody's gaol instead of a nice wild place to walk in.'

He looked towards her with pitying surprise. 'What, do you like Egdon Heath?' he said.

'I like what I was born near to; I admire its grim old face.'

'Pooh, my dear! You don't know what you like.'

'I am sure I do. There's only one thing unpleasant about Egdon.'

'What's that?'

'You never take me with you when you walk there. Why do you wander so much in it yourself if you so dislike it?'

The inquiry, though a simple one, was plainly disconcerting, and he sat down before replying. 'I don't think you often see me there. Give an instance.'

'I will,' she answered triumphantly. 'When you went out this evening, I thought that, as baby was asleep, I would see where you were going to so mysteriously without telling me. So I ran out, and followed behind you. You stopped at the place where the road forks, looked round at the bonfires, and then said, "Damn it, I'll go!" And you went quickly up the left-hand road. Then I stood and watched you.'

Wildevie frowned, afterwards saying with a forced smile, 'Well, what wonderful discovery did you make?'

'There—now you are angry, and we won't talk of this any more.' She went across to him, sat on a footstool, and looked up in his face.

'Nonsense!' he said; 'that's how you always back out. We will go on with it now we have begun. What did you next see?—I particularly want to know.'

'Don't be like that, Damon!' she murmured. 'I didn't see

anything. You vanished out of sight, and then I looked round at the bonfires and came in.'

'Perhaps this is not the only time you have dogged my steps. Are you trying to find out something bad about me?'

'Not at all. I have never done such a thing before, and I shouldn't have done it now if words had not sometimes been dropped about you.'

'What *do* you mean?' he impatiently asked.

'They say—they say you used to go to Alderworth in the evenings, and it puts into my mind what I have heard about——'

Wildeva turned angrily, and stood up in front of her. 'Now,' he said, flourishing his hand in the air, 'just out with it, madam. I demand to know what remarks you have heard.'

'Well, I heard that you used to be very fond of Eustacia, nothing more than that, though told more in a bit-by-bit way. You ought not to be angry.'

He observed that her eyes were brimming with tears. 'Well,' he said, 'there is nothing new in that, and of course I don't mean to be rough towards you, so you need not cry. Now don't let us speak of the subject any more.'

And no more was said, Thomasin being glad enough of a reason for not mentioning Clym's visit to her that evening, and his story.

CHAPTER VII.

A NIGHT WHICH BROUGHT NO REST.

HAVING resolved on flight, Eustacia at times seemed anxious that something should happen to thwart her own intention. The only event that could really change her position was the appearance of Clym. The glory which had encircled him as her lover was departed now; yet some good simple quality of his would occasionally return to her memory, and stir a momentary throb of hope that he would again present himself before her. But, calmly considered, it was not likely that such a severance as now existed would ever close up: she would have to live on as a painful object, isolated, and out of place. She had used to think of the heath alone as an uncongenial environment; she felt it now of the whole world.

Towards evening her determination to go away again revived. About four o'clock she packed up anew the few small articles she had brought in her flight from Alderworth, and also some belonging to her which had been left here: the whole formed a bundle not too large to be carried in her hand for a distance of a mile or two. The scene without grew darker; mud-coloured clouds bellied

downwards from the sky like vast hammocks slung across it, and with the increase of night a stormy wind arose; but as yet there was no rain.

Eustacia could not rest indoors, having nothing more to do, and she wandered to and fro on the hill, not far from the house that she was soon to leave. In these desultory ramblings she passed the cottage of Susan Nunsuch, a little lower down than her grandfather's. The door was ajar, and a riband of bright fire-light fell across the ground without. As Eustacia crossed the fire-beams she appeared for an instant as distinct as a figure in a phantasmagoria—a creature of light surrounded by an area of darkness: the moment passed, and she was absorbed in night again.

A woman who was sitting inside the cottage had seen and recognised her in that momentary irradiation. This was Susan herself, occupied in preparing a posset for her little boy, who, often ailing, was now seriously unwell. Susan dropped the spoon, shook her fist at the vanished figure, and then proceeded with her work in a musing absent way.

At eight o'clock, the hour at which Eustacia had promised to signal to Wildeve, if ever she signalled at all, she looked around the premises to learn if the coast was clear, went to the furze-rick, and pulled thence a long-stemmed bough of that fuel. This she carried to the corner of the bank, and, glancing behind to see if the shutters were all closed, she struck a light, and kindled the furze. When it was thoroughly ablaze Eustacia took it by the stem, and waved it in the air above her head till it had burned itself out.

She was gratified, if gratification were possible to such a mood, by seeing a similar light in the vicinity of Wildeve's residence a minute or two later. Having agreed to keep watch at this hour every night in case she should require assistance, this promptness proved how strictly he had held to his word. Four hours after the present time—that is, at midnight—he was to be ready to drive her to Budmouth as pre-arranged.

Eustacia returned to the house. Supper having been got over, she retired early, and sat in her room waiting for the time to go by. The night being dark and threatening, Captain Drew had not strolled out to gossip in any cottage, or to call at the inn, as was sometimes his custom on these long autumn nights; and he sat sipping grog alone downstairs. About ten o'clock there was a knock at the door. When the servant opened it, the rays of the candle fell upon the form of Fairway.

'I was a-forced to go to Lower Mistover to-night,' he said; 'and Mr. Yeobright asked me to leave this here on my way; but, faith, I put it in the lining of my hat, and thought no more about

it till I got back and was hasping my gate before going to bed. So I have run back with it at once.'

He handed in a letter, and went his way. The girl brought it to the Captain, who found that it was directed to Eustacia. He turned it over and over, and fancied that the writing was her husband's, though he could not be sure. However, he decided to let her have it at once if possible, and took it upstairs for that purpose; but on reaching the door of her room and looking in at the keyhole he found there was no light within, the fact being that Eustacia, without undressing, had flung herself upon the bed, to rest and gather a little strength for her coming journey. Her grandfather concluded from what he saw that he ought not to disturb her, and descending again to the parlour he placed the letter on the mantelpiece to give it her in the morning.

At eleven o'clock he went to bed himself, smoked some time in his bedroom, put out his light at half-past eleven, and then, as was his invariable custom, pulled up the blind before getting into bed, that he might see which way the wind blew on opening his eyes in the morning, his bedroom window commanding a view of the flagstaff and vane. Just as he had lain down he was surprised to observe the white pole of the staff flash into existence like a streak of phosphorus drawn downwards across the shade of night without. Only one explanation met this—a light had been suddenly thrown upon the pole from the direction of the house. As everybody had retired to rest the old man felt it necessary to get out of bed, open the window softly, and look to the right and left. Eustacia's bedroom was lighted up, and it was the shine from her window which had lighted the pole. Wondering what had aroused her, he remained undecided at the window, and was thinking of fetching the letter to slip it under her door, when he heard a slight brushing of garments on the partition dividing his room from the passage.

The Captain concluded that Eustacia was rather unwell, and would have dismissed the matter as not remarkable, had he not also heard her distinctly weeping.

'She is thinking of that husband of hers,' he said to himself. 'Ah, the silly goose! she had no business to marry him. I wonder if that letter is really his.'

He arose, threw his boat-cloak round him, opened the door, and said, 'Eustacia!' There was no answer. 'Eustacia!' he repeated louder, 'there is a letter on the mantelpiece for you.'

But no response was made to this statement save an imaginary one from the wind, which seemed to gnaw at the corners of the house, and the stroke of a few drops of rain upon the windows.

He went into the passage, and stood waiting nearly five minutes. Still she did not return. He went back for a light, and prepared to follow her, but first he looked into her bedroom. There, on the outside of the quilt, was the impression of her form, showing that the bed had not been opened; and, what was more significant, she had not taken her candlestick downstairs. He was now thoroughly alarmed, and hastily putting on his clothes he descended to the front door, which he himself had bolted and locked. It was now unfastened. There was no longer any doubt that Eustacia had left the house at this midnight hour; and whither could she have gone? To follow her was almost impossible. Had the dwelling stood in an ordinary road, two persons setting out, one in each direction, might have made sure of overtaking her; but it was a hopeless task to seek for anybody on a heath in the dark, the practicable directions for flight across it from any point being as numerous as the meridians radiating from the pole. Perplexed what to do, he looked into the parlour, and was vexed to find that the letter still lay there untouched.

At half-past eleven, finding that the house was silent, Eustacia lit her candle, put on some warm outer wrappings, took her bag in her hand, and descended the staircase. When she got into the outer air she found that it had begun to rain, and as she stood pausing at the door it increased, threatening to come on heavily. But having committed herself to this line of action there was no retreating for bad weather, since Wildeve had been communicated with, and was probably even then waiting for her. The gloom of the night was funereal; all nature seemed clothed in crape. The spiky points of the fir-trees behind the house rose into the sky like the turrets and pinnacles of an abbey. Nothing below the horizon was visible save a light which was still burning in the cottage of Susan Nunsuch.

Eustacia opened her umbrella and went out from the enclosure by the steps over the bank, after which she was beyond all danger of being perceived. Skirting the pool, she followed the path towards Blackbarrow, occasionally stumbling over twisted furze-roots, tufts of rushes, or oozing lumps of fleshy fungi, which at this season lay scattered about the heath like the rotting liver and lungs of some colossal animal. The moon and stars were closed up by cloud and rain, the density amounting to a lunar and sidereal extinction. It was a night which led the traveller's thoughts instinctively to dwell on nocturnal scenes of disaster in the chronicles of the world, and on all that is terrible and dark in history and legend—the last plague

of Egypt, the destruction of Sennacherib's host, the agony in Gethsemane.

Eustacia at length reached Blackbarrow, and stood still there to think. Never was harmony more perfect than that between the chaos of her mind and the chaos of the world without. A sudden recollection had flashed on her this moment: she had not money enough for undertaking a long journey. Amid the fluctuating sentiments of the day, her unpractical mind had not dwelt on the necessity of being well provided, and now that she thoroughly realised the conditions she sighed bitterly, and ceased to stand erect, gradually crouching down under the umbrella as if she were drawn into the barrow by a hand from beneath. Could it be that she was to remain a captive still? Money: she had never felt its value before. Even to efface herself from the country, means were required. To ask Wildeve for pecuniary aid was impossible for a woman with the shadow of pride left in her: his assistance in driving her to Budmouth had become almost distasteful to her during the last few hours, and was of the nature of humiliation. Had he not eagerly offered to do it, she could never have employed him.

Any one who had stood by now would have pitied her, not so much on account of her exposure to weather, and isolation from all of humanity except the mouldered remains inside the barrow; but for that other form of misery which was denoted by the slightly rocking movement that her feelings imparted to her person. Extreme unhappiness weighed visibly upon her. Between the drippings of the rain from her umbrella to her mantle, from her mantle to the heather, from the heather to the earth, very similar sounds could be heard coming from her lips; and the tearfulness of the outer scene was repeated upon her face. The wings of her soul were broken by the cruel obstructiveness of all about her; and even had she seen herself in a promising way of getting to Budmouth, entering a coaster, and sailing to some northern or western port, she would have been but little more buoyant, so fearfully malignant were other things. She uttered words aloud. When a woman in such a situation, neither old, deaf, crazed, nor whimsical, takes upon herself to sob and soliloquise aloud, there is something grievous the matter.

'I can't go, I can't go!' she moaned. 'No money: I can't go! And if I could, what comfort to me? I must drag on next year as I have dragged on this year, and the year after that as before. How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! . . . I do not deserve my lot!' she cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt. 'O the cruelty of putting me into this bad, ignorant, stupid world! I was capable of much;

but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O what wicked meanness it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!

The distant light which Eustacia cursorily observed in leaving the house came, as she had divined, from the cottage-window of Susan Nunsuch. What Eustacia did not divine was the occupation of the woman within at that moment. Susan's sight of her passing figure earlier in the evening, not five minutes after the sick boy's exclamation, 'Mother, I do feel so bad,' persuaded the matron that an evil influence was certainly exercised by Eustacia's propinquity.

On this account Susan did not go to bed as soon as the evening's work was over, as she would have done at ordinary times. To counteract the malign spell which she imagined poor Eustacia to be working, the boy's mother busied herself with a ghastly invention of superstition, calculated to bring powerlessness, atrophy, and annihilation on any human being against whom it was directed. It was a practice well known on Egdon at that date, and one that is not quite extinct at the present day.

She passed with her candle into an inner room where, among other utensils, were two large brown pans, containing together perhaps a hundredweight of liquid honey, the produce of the bees during the foregoing summer. On a shelf over the pans was a smooth and solid yellow mass of a hemispherical form, consisting of beeswax from the same take of honey. Susan took down the lump, and, cutting off several thin slices, heaped them in an iron ladle, with which she returned to the living-room, and placed the vessel in the hot ashes of the fireplace. As soon as the wax had softened to the plasticity of dough she kneaded the pieces together. And now her face became more intent. She began moulding the wax; and it was evident from her manner of manipulation that she was endeavouring to give it some preconceived form. The form was human.

By warming and kneading, cutting and twisting, dismembering and re-joining the incipient image, she had in about a quarter of an hour produced a shape which tolerably well resembled a woman, and was about six inches high. She laid it on the table to get cold and hard. Meanwhile, she had taken the candle and gone upstairs to where the little boy was lying.

'Did you notice, my dear, what Mrs. Eustacia wore this afternoon besides the dark dress?'

'A red ribbon round her neck.'

'Anything else?'

'No—except sandal-shoes.'

'A red ribbon and sandal-shoes,' she said to herself.

Mrs. Nunsuch went and searched till she found a fragment of the narrowest red ribbon, which she took downstairs and tied round the neck of the image. Then fetching ink and a quill from the rickety bureau by the window, she blackened the feet of the image to the extent presumably covered by shoes; and on the instep of each foot marked cross lines in the shape taken by the sandal-strings of those days. Finally she tied a bit of black thread round the upper part of the head, in faint resemblance to a fillet worn for confining the hair.

Susan held the object at arm's length, and contemplated it with a satisfaction in which there was no smile. To anybody acquainted with the inhabitants of Egdon Heath the image would have suggested Eustacia Yeobright.

From her work-basket in the window-seat the woman took a paper of pins, of the old long and yellow sort, whose heads were made to come off at their first usage. These she began to thrust into the image in all directions, with apparently excruciating energy. Probably as many as fifty were thus inserted, some into the head of the wax model, some into the shoulders, some into the trunk, some upwards through the soles of the feet, till the figure was completely permeated with pins.

She turned to the fire. It had been of turf, and though the high heap of ashes which turf fires produce was somewhat dark and dead on the outside, upon raking it abroad with the shovel the inside of the mass showed a glow of red heat. She took a few pieces of fresh turf from the chimney-corner, and built them together over the glow, upon which the fire brightened. Seizing with the tongs the image that she had made of Eustacia, she held it in the heat, and watched it as it began to waste slowly away. And while she stood thus engaged, there came from between her lips a murmur of words.

It was a strange jargon—the Lord's Prayer repeated backwards—the incantation usual in proceedings for obtaining unhallowed assistance against an enemy. Mrs. Susan uttered the lugubrious discourse three times slowly, and when it had been completed the image had considerably diminished. As the wax dropped into the fire a long flame arose from the spot, and, curling its tongue round the figure, ate still further into its substance. A pin occasionally dropped with the wax, and the embers heated it red as it lay.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN SPITE OF RAIN AND DARKNESS, SEVERAL WALK ABROAD.

WHILE the effigy of Eustacia was melting to nothing, and the fair woman herself was standing on Blackbarrow, her soul in an abyss of desolation seldom plumbed by one so young, Yeobright sat lonely at Blooms-End. He had fulfilled his word to Thomasin by sending off Fairway with the letter to his wife, and now waited with increased impatience for some sound or signal of her return. Were Eustacia still at Mistover, the very least to be expected was that she would send him back a reply to-night by the same hand; though, to leave all to her inclination, he had cautioned Fairway not to ask for an answer. If one were told or handed to him, he was to bring it immediately; if not, he was to go straight home without troubling to come round to Blooms-End again that night.

But secretly Clym had a more pleasing hope. Eustacia might possibly decline to use her pen—it was rather her way to work silently—and surprise him by appearing at his door.

To Clym's regret, it began to rain and blow hard as the evening advanced. The wind rasped and scraped at the corners of the house, and filliped the eaves-droppings like peas against the panes. He walked restlessly about the untenanted rooms, stopping strange noises in windows and doors by jamming splinters of wood into the casements and crevices, and pressing together the lead-work of the quarries where it had become loosened from the glass. It was one of the nights when cracks in the walls of old churches widen, when ancient stains on the ceilings of decayed manor-houses are renewed and enlarged from the size of a man's hand to an area of many feet. The little gate in the palings before his dwelling continually opened and clicked together again, but when he looked out eagerly, nobody was there; it was as if the invisible shapes of the dead were passing in on their way to visit him.

Between ten and eleven o'clock, finding that neither Fairway nor anybody else came to him, he retired to rest, and despite his anxieties soon fell asleep. His sleep, however, was not very sound, by reason of the expectancy he had given way to, and he was easily awakened by a knocking which began at the door about an hour after. Clym arose and looked out of the window. Rain was still falling heavily, the whole expanse of heath before him emitting a subdued hiss under the downpour. It was too dark to see anything at all.

'Who's there?' he cried.

Light footsteps shifted their position in the porch, and he could

just distinguish in a plaintive female voice the words, 'O Clym, come down and let me in!'

He flushed hot with agitation. 'Surely it is Eustacia!' he murmured. If so, she had indeed come to him unawares.

He hastily got a light, dressed himself, and went down. On his flinging open the door, the rays of the candle fell upon a woman closely wrapped up, who at once came forward.

'Thomasin!' he exclaimed in an indescribable tone of disappointment. 'It is Thomasin, and on such a night as this! Oh, where is Eustacia?'

Thomasin it was, wet, frightened, and panting.

'Eustacia? I don't know, Clym; but I can think,' she said, with much perturbation. 'Let me come in and rest—I will explain this. There is a great trouble brewing—my husband and Eustacia.'

'What? what?'

'I think my husband is going to leave me, or do something dreadful—I don't know what—Clym, will you go and see? I have nobody to help me but you. Eustacia has not come home?'

'No.'

She went on breathlessly: 'Then they are going to run off together! He came indoors to-night about eight o'clock and said in an off-hand way, "Tamsie, I have just found that I must go a journey."—"When?" I said.—"To-night," he said.—"Where?" I asked him.—"I cannot tell you at present," he said; "I shall be back again to-morrow." He then went and busied himself in looking up his things, and took no notice o' me at all. I expected to see him start, but he did not, and then it came to be ten o'clock, when he said, "You had better go to bed." I didn't know what to do, and I went to bed. I believe he thought I fell asleep, for half-an-hour after that he came up and unlocked the oak chest we keep money in when we have much in the house, and took out a roll o' something which I believe was bank-notes, though I was not aware that he had 'em there. These he must have got from the bank when he went the other day. What does he want bank-notes for, if he is only going off for a day? When he had gone down I thought of Eustacia, and how he had met her the night before—I know he did meet her, Clym, for I followed him part of the way, but I did not like to tell you when you called, and so make you think ill of him, as I did not know it was so serious. Then I could not stay in bed: I got up and dressed myself, and when I heard him out in the stable I thought I would come and tell you. So I came downstairs without any noise, and slipped out.'

‘Then he was not absolutely gone when you left?’

‘No. Will you, dear cousin Clym, go and try to persuade him not to go? He takes no notice of what I say, and puts me off with the story of his going on a journey, and will be home to-morrow, and all that; but I don’t believe it. I think you could influence him.’

‘I’ll go,’ said Clym. ‘O Eustacia!’

Thomasin carried in her arms a large bundle, and having by this time seated herself she began to unroll it, when a baby appeared as the kernel to the husks—dry, warm, and unconscious of travel or rough weather. Thomasin briefly kissed the baby, and then found time to commence crying, as she said, ‘I brought baby, for I was afraid what might happen to her. I suppose it will be her death.’

Clym hastily put together the logs on the hearth, raked abroad the embers, which were scarcely yet extinct, and blew up a flame with the bellows.

‘Dry yourself,’ he said. ‘I’ll go and get some more wood.’

‘No, no—don’t stay for that. I’ll make up the fire. Will you go at once—please will you?’

Yeobright ran upstairs to finish dressing himself. While he was gone another rapping came at the door. This time there was no delusion that it might be Eustacia’s: the footsteps just preceding it had been heavy and slow. Yeobright, thinking it might possibly be Fairway with a note in answer, descended again and opened the door.

‘Captain Drew?’ he said to a dripping figure.

‘Is my grand-daughter here?’ said the Captain.

‘No.’

‘Then, where is she?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘But you ought to know—you are her husband.’

‘Only in name, apparently,’ said Clym with rising excitement. ‘I believe she means to elope to-night with Wildeve. I am just going to look to it.’

‘Well, she has left my house; she left about half-an-hour ago. Who’s sitting there?’

‘My cousin Thomasin.’

The Captain bowed in a preoccupied way to her. ‘I only hope it is no worse than an elopement,’ he said.

‘Worse? what’s worse than the worst a wife can do?’

‘Well, I have been told a strange tale. Before starting in search of her I called up Charley, my stable-lad. I missed my pistols the other day.’

‘Pistols?’

‘He said at the time that he took them down to clean. He has now owned that he took them because he saw Eustacia looking curiously at them; and she afterwards owned to him that she was thinking of taking her life, but bound him to secrecy; and promised never to think of such a thing again. I hardly suppose she will ever have bravado enough to use one of them; but it shows what has been lurking in her mind; and people who think of that sort of thing once, think of it again.’

‘Where are the pistols?’

‘Safely locked up. O no, she won’t touch them again. But there are more ways of letting out life than through a bullet-hole. What did you quarrel about so bitterly with her to drive her to all this? You must have treated her badly indeed. Well, I was always against the marriage, and I was right.’

‘Are you going with me?’ said Yeobright, paying no attention to the Captain’s latter remark. ‘If so, I can tell you what we quarrelled about as we walk along.’

‘Where to?’

‘To Wildeve’s—that was her destination, depend upon it.’

Thomasin here broke in, still weeping: ‘He said he was only going on a sudden short journey; but if so, why did he want so much money? O Clym, what do you think will happen? I am afraid that you, my poor baby, will soon have no father left to you.’

‘I am off now,’ said Yeobright, stepping into the porch.

‘I would fain go with ye,’ said the old man, doubtfully. ‘But I begin to be afraid that my legs will hardly carry me there such a night as this. I am not so young as I was. If they are interrupted in their flight she will be sure to come back to me, and I ought to be at the house to receive her. But, be it as ’twill, I can’t walk to the Quiet Woman, and that’s an end on’t. I’ll go straight home.’

‘It will perhaps be best,’ said Clym. ‘Thomasin, dry yourself, and be as comfortable as you can.’

With this he closed the door upon her, and left the house in company with the old man, who parted from him outside the gate, taking the middle path, which led to Mistover. Clym ascended by the right-hand track towards the inn.

Thomasin, being left alone, took off some of her wet garments, carried the baby upstairs to Clym’s bed, and then came down to the sitting-room again, where she made a larger fire, and began drying herself. The fire soon flared up the chimney, giving the room an appearance of comfort that was doubled by contrast with

the drumming of the storm without, which snapped at the window-panes and breathed into the chimney strange low utterances that seemed to be the prologue to some tragedy.

But the least part of Thomasin was in the house, for, her soul being at ease about the little girl upstairs, she was mentally following Clym on his journey. Having indulged in this imaginary peregrination for some considerable interval, she became impressed with a sense of the intolerable slowness of time. But she sat on. The moment then came when she could scarcely sit longer; and it was like a satire on her patience to remember that Clym could hardly have reached the inn as yet. At last she went to the baby's bedside. The child was sleeping soundly; but her imagination of possibly disastrous events at her home, the predominance within her of the unseen over the seen, agitated her beyond endurance. She could not refrain from going down and opening the door. The rain still continued, the candle-light falling upon the nearest drops and making glistening darts of them as they descended across the throng of invisible ones behind. To plunge into that medium was to plunge into water slightly diluted with air. But the difficulty of returning to her house at this moment made her all the more desirous of doing so: anything was better than suspense. 'I have come here well enough,' she said, 'and why shouldn't I go back again? It is a mistake for me to be away.'

She hastily fetched the infant, wrapped it up, cloaked herself as before, and, shovelling the ashes over the fire to prevent accidents, went into the open air. Pausing first to put the door-key in its old place behind the shutter, she resolutely turned her face to the confronting pile of firmamental darkness beyond the palings, and stepped into its midst. But Thomasin's imagination being so actively engaged elsewhere, the night and the weather had for her no terror beyond that of their actual discomfort and difficulty.

She was soon out of Blooms-End valley and traversing the undulations on the other side of the hill. The noise of the wind over the heath was shrill, and as if it whistled for joy at finding a night so congenial as this. Sometimes the path led her to hollows between thickets of tall and dripping bracken, dead, though not yet prostrate, which enclosed her like a pool. When they were more than usually tall, she lifted the baby to the top of her head, that it might be out of the reach of their drenching fronds. On higher ground, where the wind was brisk and sustained, the rain flew in a level flight without appreciable descent, so that it was beyond all power to imagine the remoteness of the point at which it left the bosoms of the clouds. Here self-defence was impossible, and individual drops stuck into her like the arrows into Saint

Sebastian. She was enabled to avoid pools by the nebulous paleness which signified their presence, though beside anything less dark than the heath they themselves would have appeared as blackness.

Yet in spite of all this Thomasin was not sorry that she had started. To her there were not, as to Eustacia, demons in the air, and malice in every bush and bough. The drops which lashed her face were not scorpions, but prosy rain; Egdon in the mass was no monster whatever, but impersonal open ground. Her fears of the place were rational, her dislikes of its worst moods reasonable. At this time it was in her view a windy wet place, in which a person might experience much discomfort, lose the path without care, and possibly catch cold.

If the path is well known, the difficulty at such times of keeping therein is not altogether great, from its familiar feel to the feet; but once lost it is irrecoverable. Owing to her baby, who somewhat impeded Thomasin's view forward and distracted her mind, she did at last lose the track. This mishap occurred when she was descending an open plateau about half-way home. Instead of attempting, by wandering hither and thither, the hopeless task of finding such a mere thread, she went straight on, trusting for guidance to her general knowledge of the district, which was scarcely surpassed by Clym's or by that of the heathercoppers themselves.

At length Thomasin reached a hollow, and began to discern through the rain a faint blotted radiance, which presently assumed the oblong form of an open door. She instantly knew that no house stood hereabouts, and was soon aware of the nature of the door by its height above the ground.

'Why, it is Diggory Venn's van, surely?' she said.

A certain secluded spot near Blackbarrow was, she knew, often Venn's chosen centre when staying in this neighbourhood; and she guessed at once that she had stumbled upon this mysterious retreat. The question arose in her mind whether or not she should ask him to guide her into the path. In her anxiety to reach home she decided that she would appeal to him, notwithstanding the strangeness of appearing before his eyes at this place and season. But when, in pursuance of this resolve, Thomasin reached the van and looked in, she found it to be untenanted; though there was no doubt that it was the reddleman's. The fire was burning in the stove, the lantern hung from the nail. Round the doorway the floor was merely sprinkled with rain, and not saturated, which told her that the door had not long been opened.

While she stood *uncertainly* looking in, Thomasin heard a

footstep advancing from the darkness behind her ; and, turning, she beheld a well-known form in corduroy, lurid from head to foot, the lantern-beams falling upon him through an intervening gauze of rain-drops which descended in front.

‘I thought you went down the slope,’ he said, without noticing her face. ‘How do you come back here again?’

‘Diggory?’ said Thomasin faintly.

‘Who are you?’ said Venn, still unperceiving. ‘And why were you crying so just now?’

‘Oh Diggory! don’t you know me?’ said she. ‘But of course you don’t, wrapped up like this. What do you mean? I have not been crying, and I have not been here before.’

Venn then came nearer till he could see the illuminated side of her form.

‘Mrs. Wildeve!’ he exclaimed, starting. ‘What a time for us to meet! And the baby, too? What dreadful thing can have brought you out on such a night as this?’

She could not immediately answer; and without asking her permission he hopped into his van, took her by the arm, and drew her up after him.

‘What is it?’ he continued when they stood within.

‘I have lost my way coming from Blooms-End, and I am in a great hurry to get home. Please show me as quickly as you can. It is so silly of me not to know Egdon better, and I cannot think how I came to lose the path. Show me quickly, Diggory, please.’

‘Yes, of course. I will go with ye. But you came to me before this, Mrs. Wildeve?’

‘I only came this minute.’

‘That’s strange. I was lying down here asleep about five minutes ago, with the door shut to keep out the weather, when the brushing of a woman’s clothes over the heath-bushes just outside woke me up (for I don’t sleep heavy), and at the same time I heard a sobbing or crying from the same woman. I opened my door and held out my lantern, and just as far as the light would reach I saw the woman: she turned her head when the light sheened on her, and then hurried on down-hill. I hung up the lantern, and was curious enough to pull on my things and dog her a few steps, but I could see nothing of her any more. That was where I had been when you came up; and when I saw you I thought you were the same one.’

‘Perhaps it was one of the he’th-folk going home?’

‘No, it couldn’t be. ’Tis too late. The noise of her gown over the he’th was of a whistling sort that nothing but silk will make.’

'It wasn't I, then. My dress is not silk, you see . . . Are we anywhere in a line between Mistover and the inn?'

'Well, yes; not far out.'

'Ah, I wonder! Diggory, I must go at once.'

She jumped down from the van before he was aware, when Venn unhooked the lantern and leapt down after her. 'I'll take the baby, ma'am,' he said. 'You must be tired out by the weight.'

Thomasin hesitated a moment, and then delivered the baby into Venn's hands. 'Don't squeeze her, Diggory,' she said, 'or hurt her little arm; and keep the cloak close over her like this, so that the rain may not drop in her face.'

'I will,' said Venn earnestly. 'As if I could hurt anything belonging to you!'

'I only meant accidentally,' said Thomasin.

'The baby is dry enough, but you are pretty wet,' said the reddleman when, in closing the door of his cart to padlock it, he noticed on the floor a ring of water-drops where her cloak had hung from her.

Thomasin followed him as he wended right and left to avoid the larger bushes, stopping occasionally and covering the lantern while he looked over his shoulder to gain some idea of the position of Blackbarrow above them, which it was necessary to keep directly behind their backs to preserve a proper course.

'You are sure the rain does not fall upon baby?'

'Quite sure. May I ask how old he is, ma'am?'

'He!' said Thomasin reproachfully. 'Anybody can see better than that in a moment. She is nearly two months old. How far is it now to the inn?'

'A little over a quarter of a mile.'

'Will you walk a little faster?'

'I was afraid you could not keep up.'

'I am very anxious to get there. Ah, there is a light from the window!'

'Tis not from the window. That's a gig-lamp, to the best of my belief.'

'Oh!' said Thomasin in despair. 'I wish I had been there sooner—give me the baby, Diggory—you can go back now.'

'I must go all the way,' said Venn. 'There is a quag between us and that light, and you will walk into it up to your neck unless I take you round.'

'But the light is at the inn, and there is no quag in front of that.'

'No, the light is below the inn some hundred yards.'

‘Never mind,’ said Thomasin hurriedly. ‘Go towards the light, and not towards the inn.’

‘Yes,’ answered Venn, swerving round in obedience; and after a pause—‘I wish you would tell me what this great trouble is. I think you have proved that I can be trusted.’

‘There are some things that cannot be—cannot be told to——’ And then her heart rose into her throat, and she could say no more.

(To be continued.)

The Sun in his Glory.

BY RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

ANOTHER step has recently been taken towards a more exact knowledge of the nature and condition of that mighty orb which rules and lights and warms the earth and all the family of planets. The total eclipse of the present year, the last which for several years is likely to be observed by scientific men, has not passed without adding notably to our knowledge respecting the sun. Other opportunities for observation, and other methods of research, have also been employed of late with considerable success. The occasion then seems a fitting one for presenting a brief and simple statement of the present position of solar research.

It is strange to consider how wonderfully our ideas respecting the sun have changed during the last quarter of a century. Twenty years or so ago, the sun was regarded by many as what Sir W. Herschel had said that possibly the sun might be—a dark orb surrounded by various envelopes of lustrous and heat-emitting clouds. According to this view, the sun might even be regarded as possibly a fit abode for living creatures. Others held a different view, the ancient but on the whole more probable opinion that the sun is a great mass of intensely hot matter. The sun-spots were known, and had been carefully watched and studied. Indeed the best series of observations ever made on the sun were either completed, or very nearly so, in the year 1858. But though much was known about the spots very little was understood. As to the physical constitution of the sun nothing was known about it, and no one had any hope at that time that aught could be learned exactly on that point, though some few considered it barely possible that inferences of greater or less probability might be suggested by various lines of research then entered upon.

At present all this is altered—we know the sun to be infinitely more complex in structure, infinitely more wonderful in physical condition, than it was formerly thought to be. We have learned what its substance consists of, in what condition that substance exists, or rather through what varying conditions it passes. We have found the sun to be something utterly unlike the orb we see, for we have learned that even as the glowing veil of air hides by day the chief glories of the universe, so it hides the largest (though not the most massive) part even of that one sun among hundreds

of millions of suns which can at that time be seen. We have also learned more exactly to measure and weigh the mighty orb which rules the motions of our earth and her fellow-planets.

The sun, as seen in the sky, is a globe of fire some eight-hundred and sixty-thousand miles in diameter, and lying at a distance from us amounting to about ninety-two and a third millions of miles. It affords a startling conception of this tremendous distance to consider that a ball fired at the sun from the mouth of an Armstrong gun and travelling with undiminished speed directly towards him, would only reach him in about thirteen years. If the sound could travel sunwards at the same rate as in air, the sound of the explosion would reach the sun almost half a year later. An American student of science, Professor Mendenhall of Columbus, has given a striking, though fanciful, illustration of the sun's distance. If a baby had (which is not customary) an arm ninety-three million miles long, and on the first day of its existence touched the sun, then, according to the best estimates of the rate at which feeling travels, the baby might grow to manhood and the man attain to extreme old age, without ever feeling the pain of the burn. In fact one hundred and thirty-two years would be required to convey along that monstrous arm, the sensation of burning which had affected the finger tips. But, in reality, the most striking thought in connection with the sun's distance is that light, though travelling over a distance nearly equal to eight times the circumference of the earth in a single second, takes nearly nine minutes in reaching us from the sun.

In passing, a word or two may be said respecting changes which have recently been made in our estimates of the sun's distance. Many who may have remembered that a distance of more than ninety-three and a third million miles was announced in Parliament last year, as the result of the British transit expeditions, may perhaps look with doubt on the distance of ninety-two and a third million miles, which I have just mentioned. It may be well to say, then, that the official astronomers responsible for working out the transit observations, have come round to this smaller distance. I ventured to express in the '*Times*,' even when our chief official astronomer had stated his belief that no considerable change would be made in his result, my own opinion that the lesser distance would be eventually adopted by others if not by him. But I did not expect to find my opinion so quickly confirmed as it has been. Step by step,—each two or three hundred thousand miles long,—our official astronomers have reduced their estimate; until finally (at least I suppose so) they announce ninety-two million four hundred thousand miles as the most

probable result of the British transit observations. They admit, as I had also ventured to point out, that any value within a million miles or so on either side of this distance, can be reconciled with the observations. But ninety-two and a third million miles is the most probable value; and as six or seven different and far superior series of observations had pointed to the same distance we may unhesitatingly accept that as within two or three hundred thousand miles of the true distance separating us from the mighty mass of the sun.

With a diameter exceeding our earth's one hundred and nine times, the sun has a surface exceeding the earth's eleven thousand eight hundred times, and a volume exceeding hers about one million two hundred and seventy thousand times. In mass or quantity of matter he does not so greatly exceed the earth. Still it would take about three hundred and thirty thousand globes like the earth to make up the quantity of matter which exists in the sun. All the planets together do not amount in mass to a seven hundred and fortieth part of the sun's mass.

The enormous quantity of matter he possesses gives the sun tremendous power, though his actual action on our earth is not so great as many imagine, for his energy is enormously reduced by distance. A child could hold a ton of matter against the pull of the sun at the earth's distance. But if this earth of ours retaining its present size, contained as much matter as the sun, the strongest man (supposing he himself not crushed flat and thin as gold leaf by his own weight) would not be able to lift the quantity of matter in one of our half-ounce weights. It would press downwards with as much energy as one hundred and sixty five thousand ounces or nearly five tons of matter on the earth as she at present is; a small mass such as this raised only to a height of a single inch and let fall, would strike the earth with three times the velocity of the swiftest express train. At the surface of the sun himself his attractive energy is not nearly so great, because his size is so much greater, and his surface so much farther away from the centre. Still a man of average weight, if placed at the sun's surface, and supposed not to be in a moment converted into thinnest vapour, would be pressed down as with the weight of twenty-six other men on his shoulders, and crushed completely flat.

Such is the sun's mass, the quality in virtue of which he bears sway over the members of his family. Mercury has to travel at the rate of nearly twenty-nine and a half miles in a second to get centrifugal tendency enough to retain his distance from the sun. Venus, farther away, requires only a velocity of about twenty-one and a half miles a second; our earth only eighteen and a half

The world was void,
 The populous and powerful was a lump,
 Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless,
 A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
 Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
 And their masts fell down piecemeal; as they dropped,
 They slept on the abyss without a surge—
 The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
 The moon, their mistress, had expired before;
 The winds were withered in the stagnant air,
 And the clouds perished; Darkness had no need
 Of aid from them—she was the Universe!

In reality the long miseries described so powerfully by Byron in the passages omitted from the above quotation, would not trouble the people of this earth if ever 'the bright sun was extinguished.' In less than a day every drop of moisture in the air would be precipitated. (Herschel allows two days, but I cannot see how even a day could pass without this change being completely wrought.) And then in less than another day, all the heat remaining to the black earth would be radiated away into space, and a cold in comparison with which the cold of the bitterest Arctic winter would be as the warmth of a summer's day, would take possession of the entire earth; no living thing could possibly survive to the end of the third day,—if we can call that interval a day which would pass unmeasured by the light of either sun or moon.

Among all the discoveries of modern science few are more surprising than those relating to the fires of the great central orb. When we consider merely the quantity of heat which is distributed moment by moment to the worlds around the sun, and in still greater abundance to surrounding space, we are ready almost to believe that the desolation described by Byron may be no such remote danger after all. In each second of time the sun distributes as much heat as would be produced by the consumption of eleven thousand eight hundred millions of millions of tons of coal. (If our earth's surface glowed with the same heat, she could give out as much heat as would result from the burning of almost exactly a billion tons.) But it is easily calculated that if the sun consisted entirely of coal, burning at this rate, he would burn out in less than five thousand years. It is not then by burning that he gives out heat. Again, if he were simply glowing with inherent heat and radiating that heat into space, he would lose so large a portion of his heat in five thousand years that he would be quite unfit to serve as our sun. Whence, then, is the supply maintained? and (stranger question still) whence has it been derived?

The answer is a startling one. The solar heat is derived from

the gravitation of the sun's mass, leading to his steady contraction in volume. Meteoric downfall may supply and doubtless does supply a part of the sun's heat. But that downfall is in reality a part of the same process of contraction. The meteors as yet ungathered, which nevertheless are one day to be gathered in by the sun, must be regarded as belonging to the sun, just as clouds floating in our air belong in reality to our earth. When the sun gathers in such meteors he receives a certain accession of heat; but his volume has in corresponding degree diminished, and we know that while the contraction which he can undergo in this way, by gathering in the outlying meteoric portions of his substance, is but small, the contraction he can undergo by the shrinking inwards of his present substance is enormous; were it otherwise we could not expect a long continuance of his present emission of light and heat. But there seems scarcely any limit to the contraction he can undergo in the future.

In the past, the sun has undergone contraction far greater in amount, but less important when regarded in its heat-generating effect. For the more the sun contracts, the more effective becomes each part of the process of contraction. It is, however, certain from the study of our earth's crust, and the evidence it affords of long past ages during which the sun has poured light and heat upon the earth, that the past contraction of the sun must have been competent to produce a supply of heat such as he now emits, for a period of one hundred million years. Now here a strange difficulty presents itself. If the sun's mass had originally occupied infinite space and had contracted till it occupied—as it now seems to do—a spherical space eight-hundred and sixty thousand miles in diameter, the entire supply of heat corresponding to that process of contraction would not have amounted to more than would maintain the sun's present emission for about twenty millions of years. Some have been led to believe, on this account, that the evidence given by the earth's crust must be erroneous. Others who perceive that the above-named period of a hundred millions of years cannot exceed and is probably in reality far short of the truth, have adopted the startling theory that a large proportion of the sun's heat was derived from the collision of two suns, each travelling with enormous velocity through space, combining to form his present mass. It appears to me that while this theory must be regarded as altogether untenable, and while the evidence given by the earth's crust must be accepted as incontrovertible, we may accept, or rather we are almost forced to accept, another theory, which suggests very strange thoughts as to the actual condition of our sun. We get rid of our difficulty at once if we adopt the theory

that the central part of the sun is very dense compared with the outer part, if we assume in fact that nearly all the real mass of the sun is comprised within a nucleus as small perhaps compared with the globe we see, as that globe is compared with the volume of the real sun in his glory, as total eclipses reveal that glory to our view. There are other reasons, which could not properly be considered here for regarding this view as probable. If the difficulty I have mentioned above can be removed in no other way—and I confess I see no other solution which can be regarded as even plausible—the belief in a mightily contracted solar nucleus will become a scientific necessity.

Before passing from the consideration of the sun's heat there is one thought which may well for a moment detain us. The emission of solar heat is altogether the most important process, represents altogether the mightiest energies, with which we are acquainted from actual observation. The shining of the stars at night speaks indeed of energies compared with which the energy of our sun is but as one unit among hundreds of millions. But we have no means of actually measuring the total heat emission of any star, far less of determining the totality of stellar heat and light. Solar heat we can measure; and we know of no process which can be for a moment compared with the sun's activity. Indeed, almost every other process or form of energy with which we are acquainted is a direct product of the solar energies. Now it is a strange, one may almost say a fearful thought, that the products of this tremendous and constant activity, are, according to our way of viewing the matter, almost utterly wasted. Only one ray out of two thousand millions emitted by the sun falls on the earth; and not more than one ray out of two thousand and thirty millions falls on any of the planets. All the rest are poured into the star depths, and serve no useful purpose of which we have (at present at least) any cognisance whatever! Compared with this, no instance of apparent waste among the myriads of such instances which nature presents to our view, seems worthy of a thought. Here is the great source of all the forms of energy existing on the earth, apparently wasted in the proportion of two hundred and thirty million lost parts to one part utilised.

What the telescope has to tell us of the sun is doubtless tolerably well known to all who will read these pages. They have heard how Galileo, Fabricius, and Scheiner detected spots on the surface of the orb which had for so many ages been regarded as free from stain or blemish, an emblem of celestial purity. From the study of these the law of the sun's rotation was gradually determined—a law by no means so simple as some imagine. W

is one of the strangest of all the facts known about the sun that the spots near his equator are carried round in less than twenty-five days, while those farthest from that circle only complete their circuits in some twenty-eight days. It is very difficult to picture the condition of an orb whose equatorial regions thus gain three days' rotation on regions in mid latitude in a single turning, or one complete rotation in nine or ten turnings. I believe that, when we come to regard the real mass of the sun as lying far within the limits of the globe we see and measure, this difficulty will be in a great degree removed.

If we adopt this opinion, however, the spots could no longer be regarded as belonging to the true mass of the sun. They would be phenomena affecting the globular region around his true mass, but not necessarily affecting his nuclear regions at all. We know, of course, that enormous quantities of matter must occupy the surrounding region which is limited by the visible solar surface. We are even able to determine the elements of which that matter consists. But enormous though the absolute quantity of this surrounding matter may be, it is probably exceedingly small relatively. Thus we may find an explanation of the rapid changes which affect the solar spots, and also the peculiarities of appearance which the spots present during the various stages of their formation, development, and dissolution. The singular striation of the half-tinted fringe surrounding the dark central parts of spots, might perhaps be found rather to resemble the striation of our own terrestrial and auroral curtains, than to result from an actual material striation of the sun's substance. The changes affecting sun-spots would be, like those affecting the auroral streamers, changes mainly resulting from a change of condition, not from any real change in the position of the matter forming the streamers.

However, we must not here enter into the consideration of theories or speculations, which could only be properly dealt with at much greater length and with much closer reasoning than would be suitable for these pages. Only it may be mentioned, in passing, that the theory of the auroral nature of all visible solar phenomena will be found to have its bearing on phenomena visible during eclipses of the sun, as well as on those which the telescope discloses in the solar globe as seen in the sky.

The alternate increase and diminution of the spots in number in a period averaging about eleven years and a ninth remains still among the unexplained results of solar research. We have theories in abundance to show how it might be brought about, none which seems to explain how it is actually produced. The motion of Jupiter in his orbit has been regarded as in some way associated with the sun-

spot period; but since for many Jovian periods in succession sun-spots have appeared in greatest number when Jupiter was nearest to the sun, and for many such periods the greatest number when Jupiter was farthest from the sun (to say nothing of long intermediate intervals during which the greatest number of sun-spots appeared when Jupiter was nearly at his mean distance) this association must be regarded as altogether imaginary, or rather it would be more correctly described as altogether unimaginable. Other relations supposed to exist between the sun-spots and the planetary motions seem almost equally open to exception. In fact, we can only say at present that the sun-spots wax and wane in number in a period rather exceeding eleven years, with certain subordinate periods, as also some longer but less clearly recognised periods of variation: we can assert nothing positively respecting cause and causes of such periodic changes. Nay, when we examine the records of solar observation since the days of Galileo, we find reason even to question whether the period of eleven years and a ninth is the true one, or only approximately true during the present century. For in Wolff's list of years in which the sun has been most spotted and least spotted since Galileo's time, we find some intervals of more than twenty years instead of about eleven years from maximum to maximum or from minimum to minimum of sun-spot frequency.

Similar doubts seem to hang over the relation once believed to exist between sun-spots and terrestrial magnetism. This relation has always been denied by the present astronomer royal, who states that the Greenwich magnetic records afford no evidence in its favour. But it is now regarded by many astronomers as disproved in a more general way. Faye, for instance, the eminent French mathematician, asks how two periods can be regarded as associated by the very persons who maintain most strenuously the trustworthiness of researches assigning ten years as the value of one period and eleven years as the value of the other. There seems no room on the one hand for doubting the accuracy of Wolff's estimate of the sun-spot period at eleven years and a ninth. On the other there seems no reason for questioning the value of about ten years which Sabine and Lamont have assigned to the period in which the earth's magnetism oscillates in energy. Suppose, now, that at any given epoch the time when sun-spots are most numerous agrees with the time when terrestrial magnetic disturbances are greatest; then sixty years after that epoch, six times ten years having passed, terrestrial magnetic disturbances will again have attained their greatest value; but as five sun-spot periods and a half will have passed, *sun-spots will be fewest in number*. The time of

greatest magnetic disturbance will therefore agree with the time of least solar disturbance—a relation the exact opposite of that which had prevailed sixty years before. Sixty years later the original state of things will be renewed. Sixty years later still, it will be again reversed, and so on continually. In other words, the two periods are in no way connected together.

I fear we must regard the supposed connection between the sun-spot period and magnetic disturbances, the occurrence of great auroras, and so forth, as having its origin, like so many other relations which the progress of science has caused to be forgotten, in mere coincidence. It so chanced that the sun-spot period was first fully recognised at a time when the time of many sun-spots agreed with the time of greatest magnetic disturbance for several sun-spot periods in succession. If the sun-spot period had been recognised sixty years earlier or sixty years later, the probability is that the time of *fewest* sun-spots would have been associated with the time of greatest magnetic disturbance. And if the sun-spot period had been recognised thirty years earlier or later, no relation at all would have been suspected, for the time of most sun-spots would then have come midway between the time of greatest and the time of least magnetic disturbance.

This reasoning, like Faye's, is based on the assumption that both the sun-spot period and the period of the magnetic oscillatory changes have been determined either correctly or nearly so. If they have not been, then it still remains possible that the supposed association between the two periods may have a real existence.

The determination of the actual substances, or many of them, which form the sun's mass, must be regarded as among the greatest triumphs of science. In some respects it even surpasses in interest the recognition of the law of universal gravity.

Without entering into details which would here be out of place, the way in which the sun's material constitution was determined may be thus described. By means of the instrument called the spectroscope, it was found possible to separate the rays which form the sun's light into their several colours. The red rays are brought to one place, the orange rays set next, the yellow next, then the green, the blue, the indigo, and lastly the violet. Not only are the colours thus distributed, but they are arranged according to their several tints, the red merging by indefinite gradations into the orange, the orange into the yellow, and so on. Now if we imagine a number of threads of different colours thus arranged, we see that the finer the threads and the greater their *number*, the more perfect would the gradation be. We can

readily conceive that though threads of all the tints of red, orange, yellow, &c., might not be present in the collection, it might yet happen that the entire space occupied by the array would be covered, simply because the breadth of the individual threads might enable them to cover more than the space really due to their respective tints. But if for coarse threads fine threads were substituted, for fine threads mere filaments, for these still finer filaments, and lastly such filaments as twisted in hundreds would form but a thread like that of the spider's web, we see that millions of tints might be represented in a rainbow-tinted streak a few inches in length, and yet the fine filaments composing it might barely touch each other, allowing no gaps to be seen. Such an array of tints (the threads lying square to the length of the rainbow-tinted streak) would fairly illustrate the separation of colours in a pure spectrum. But when sunlight is thus dealt with, when the countless millions of tints really forming it are brought to their proper position in the spectrum, it is found that thousands of tints are missing. It is as though from the array of fine filaments just described, forming a complete rainbow-tinted streak, hiding a dark background, hundreds of red filaments (not close together, but of distinct tints) were withdrawn, hundreds of orange filaments, hundreds of yellow filaments, and so forth, until instead of a perfect rainbow-tinted streak there remained a rainbow-tinted streak crossed (athwart its length) by multitudes of fine dark lines, representing the places where filaments had been withdrawn. Such is the solar spectrum. In other words, sunlight contains rays of all the colours of the rainbow, but of the millions of millions of tints included in these colours hundreds of thousands are missing from among the solar rays.

Now it was found that every element when in the vapourous form and glowing with intensity of heat, has the power of emitting rays of certain special tints peculiar to itself. At first no connection was perceived between this discovery and the existence of dark lines in the solar spectrum. But at length Kirchhoff discovered that each element has the power of absorbing rays of the same tints which it emits. When a vapour is interposed between the eye and a mass of glowing solid or liquid matter, the vapour allows all rays except those peculiar to itself to pass freely. But it absorbs the rays which it is capable of emitting. If it is cooler than the glowing solid or liquid matter it cannot make up by its own emission for the rays which it absorbs; thus when the light which reaches the eye is analysed with the spectroscope, these tints are found to be deficient. If it is hotter it more than makes up for the loss of these rays, and under analysis with the spectroscope

these tints are found to be in excess. Lastly, if it is at the same temperature as the glowing solid or liquid source of light, its emission just makes up for its absorption, and the spectroscope affords no trace of any effect produced by the interposition of the vapour.

The application of this great discovery of Kirchhoff's to the interpretation of the solar dark lines is obvious. Every dark line or missing tint is due to the absorptive action of some vapour in the sun's atmosphere. Any family of such lines which can be shown to be identical with a family of lines which some given gaseous element emits when in a given condition, proves that that element in that condition is present in the sun's atmosphere at a cooler temperature than the mass which it surrounds. If any set of bright lines be seen in the solar spectrum—that is, if a certain family of tints appear in excess, and can be similarly identified with the special tints of a known element—we infer, or rather we know, that that element is present in the sun's atmosphere at a higher temperature than the general mass of the sun.¹

By this method it has been shown that the sun's vapourous envelope contains iron, lead, copper, hydrogen, sodium, magnesium, cobalt, nickel, and a number of other elements, with which we

¹ The subject of spectroscopic analysis is so difficult to explain, and so great a variety exists in the receptivity of different minds for different explanations, that I feel tempted to quote here an entirely new and original explanation given by Prof. Newcomb in his fine work on *Popular Astronomy*:—‘Suppose Nature should loan us an immense collection of many millions of gold pieces out of which we were to select those which would serve us for money, and return her the remainder. The English rummage through the pile, and pick out all the pieces which are of the proper weight for sovereigns and half sovereigns; the French pick out those which will make five, ten, twenty, or fifty franc pieces; the Americans the one, five, ten, and twenty dollar pieces, and so on. After all the suitable pieces are thus selected let the remaining mass be spread out on the ground according to the respective weights of the pieces, the smallest pieces being placed in a row, the next weight in an adjoining row, and so on. We shall then find a number of rows missing; one which the French have taken out for five franc pieces, close to it another which the Americans have taken for dollars; afterwards a row which has gone for half sovereigns, and so on. By thus arranging the pieces one would be able to tell what nations had culled over the pile, if he only knew of what weight each one made its coins. The gaps in the places where the sovereigns and half sovereigns belonged would indicate the English, that in the dollars and eagles the Americans, and so on. If, now, we reflect how utterly hopeless it would appear, from the mere examination of the miscellaneous pile of pieces which had been left, to ascertain what people had been selecting coins from it, and how easy the problem would appear when once some genius should make the proposed arrangement of the pieces in rows, we shall see in what the fundamental idea of spectrum analysis consists. The formation of the spectrum is the separation and arrangement of the light which comes from an object on the same system by which we have supposed the gold pieces to be arranged. The gaps we see in the spectrum tell the tale of the atmosphere through which the light has passed, as in the case of the coins they would tell what nations had sorted over the pile.’

are more or less familiar. The presence of oxygen and nitrogen is also strongly suspected. Indeed, the experiments of Dr. Draper, of New York, seem to demonstrate the existence of oxygen if not of nitrogen: but doubts have been raised in this country as to the validity of the evidence which he has obtained, and for the present it will be safer to regard the matter as undecided. Albeit we can entertain little doubt that these gases and all the terrestrial elements are present in large quantities in the sun, the point which remains undetermined is whether we have yet obtained valid evidence on the subject. The *à priori* probability that these elements exist in the sun, is so great that without any evidence we might feel tolerably certain that they are present.

But the sun we see is only a small part (so far as volume is concerned) of the true sun. So great is his splendour, and so brilliantly in consequence does he illuminate our atmosphere, that when he seems to be shining in full glory in the heavens he is, in reality, shorn of a large portion of his true glory, so far at least as the splendour of a heavenly body may be regarded as depending on volume.

Immediately outside the globe we see comes an amazingly complex atmosphere, some three or four hundred miles in depth. We may say of this atmosphere that it has never been seen even during eclipses. Its existence has been demonstrated, but it is too shallow and remains in view too short a time to be actually perceived with the most powerful telescope yet directed towards it. Its existence has been demonstrated by spectroscopic analysis, as follows:—

When the moon passing over the sun's disc in total eclipse just hides the last fine thread of sunlight, there remains still in view for two or three seconds whatever vapourous matter may lie just above the solar globe. Now during this short interval of time the light received by the observer comes from this vapourous envelope. If analysed with the spectroscope, then it must show the tints belonging to the vapours which form the envelope. And if the envelope contains all or most of the vapours whose absorptive action causes the solar dark lines, then, since these vapours are for the moment shining alone, we ought to have a spectrum showing just as many bright lines as the solar spectrum shows dark lines. To use an illustration employed in an article in the 'Times' which has been attributed to myself, 'suppose that athwart a strip of dark paper millions of fine coloured threads were laid so as to form a rainbow-tinted streak (as described above), and that while all those corresponding to the missing tints of the solar spectrum were gummed down to the dark paper, these were

left ungummed ;' then 'if a similar strip of dark paper, having a slightly adhesive surface, were superposed on the rainbow-tinted array of threads and gently pressed down, so that when lifted again all the ungummed threads adhered to it, the first strip, thus robbed of twenty or thirty thousand tints, would fairly picture the solar spectrum ; while the second strip, showing these twenty or thirty thousand threads, would fairly picture the spectrum of the solar atmosphere. One would be a rainbow-tinted streak crossed at right angles by numbers of dark lines ; the other would be a dark strip crossed by a rainbow-tinted array of bright lines at right angles to its length.' The latter beautiful appearance was presented to Prof. C. A. Young (of Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H.) when during the total eclipse of December 1870 he examined the light received from the portion of the sun invisible under ordinary conditions, lying just outside the part of his invisible disc which last disappeared. The observation, which was questioned by some less experienced in physical research, has since been several times repeated, and always with the same result. We learn, then, that outside the visible globe of the sun there is an atmospheric shell, which cannot be less than two hundred or more than five hundred miles in depth, in which are present all or nearly all the vapours whose absorptive action produces the solar spots. The vapours of iron, copper, and lead, for instance, are present in enormous but in varying quantities in that fiery atmosphere, just as in our own atmosphere the vapour of water is always present, but not always to the same extent. Glowing hydrogen is there as a fixed constituent just as oxygen and nitrogen are fixed constituents of our own air. Whether glowing oxygen and nitrogen are present in it as non-luminous (because cool) oxygen and nitrogen are present in ours, remains yet to be determined. I had partly hoped that some evidence might have been obtained on this point during the recent eclipse ; but it does not appear that any attempt was made to identify the bright lines of oxygen or nitrogen on that occasion.

Above the complex atmosphere, to a height varying from five or six thousand to ten thousand miles, is the sierra, an envelope of glowing hydrogen, into which, from time to time, other vapours are poured (apparently) from the sun's interior, especially from the neighbourhood of great spots. These sometimes extend to enormous heights, forming the objects called prominences. I have said that vapours are *apparently* poured forth ; for it is by no means certain that, when in any particular region of the sierra, the glowing vapour of sodium, magnesium, or other elements, makes its appearance, it has necessarily just flowed into that region. Quite

probably there is merely a change of condition in vapour already present, the vapour not arriving when it makes its appearance, but then beginning to glow. Indeed, the motions which seem to take place in the sierra and in the coloured prominences are so tremendous that it is almost a relief to recognise some way of explaining the observed phenomena which would free us from the necessity of believing in such rapid transfer of matter. Cornu has recently advanced the doctrine that the changes which have been supposed to indicate the occurrence of eruptions in the sierra, and the enormous prominences which have been regarded as phenomena of eruption, are in reality due simply to electric currents by which vast masses of gas are caused to glow with intense lustre. He points out that the rapid extension and sudden contraction or disappearance of prominences would thus be explained, without recourse to the improbable hypothesis of jets of gas having velocities of hundreds of miles a second.

It must, however, be mentioned that this explanation would not account for the spectroscopic evidence of motions of enormous velocity towards or from the observer. If this evidence is valid—that is, if the spectral lines really have shifted their position, as some spectroscopists assert—there must have been a bodily transference of the glowing gas to which they belong, in the direction of the line of sight. The change of condition, suggested by Cornu, would in reality correspond to a greater range of vibration in the molecules of the gas. The spectroscopic observation implies an apparent change in the wave-lengths, which is a very different thing, and cannot be brought about (that is, even the appearance of such a change cannot be brought about) by the change which Cornu imagines.

This point is so important that I shall endeavour to illustrate it in such a way as to make the considerations on which it depends clear to the reader. Suppose smooth water, perfectly clear, to be invisible to a particular observer, but that so soon as the water is ruffled he can see it. Then, if he observed at a distance the appearance of ruffled water, where a moment before he had seen none, he might imagine that there had been an inrush of water there, taking place with enormous rapidity. But if he reflected that a mere change in the condition of the water would account for its becoming thus suddenly visible, he would probably accept as the most probable inference the belief that a change of this kind had taken place and that there had been no influx of water. Suppose, however, that he makes an observation of an entirely different sort. Suppose he can recognise the repeated waves, and count them as they cross a certain point in his field of view. Suppose it to be known to him that if the water is undergoing no bodily transfer-

ence the waves must cross that point at a certain definite rate whether the ruffling of the water is slight or great, and that, as a matter of fact, he finds they are crossing that point at a greater or less rate. Then he cannot account for *this* peculiarity by assuming any change to have taken place in the extent to which the water is ruffled. He must infer, if his observation is trustworthy, that there is a current then transferring the water bodily, waves and all, athwart the field of view, in the same direction as the waves travel if they pass the fixed point more quickly, in the opposite direction if they pass that point more slowly, than before. Now it is such evidence as this that the spectroscope gives, or has been said to give, respecting the vapours forming the sierra, and the coloured prominences. When a spectral line is shifted, the meaning is that the waves are following each other either more quickly or less quickly, according to the direction of the change. But no change in the temperature of the vapour would cause this to happen, in whatever way this change was brought about. We can only explain an observed change in the position of a spectral line by concluding that there is at the moment a bodily transference of the glowing vapour to which the line belongs, taking place from or towards the eye with enormous rapidity. On the whole I cannot think Cornu has succeeded in overthrowing the evidence on which the inference has been based that these motions take place in and near the sun, at the rate of many miles in every second of time.

The coloured prominences may be regarded as occupying a region some hundred thousand miles in depth outside the region occupied by the sierra. It is true that a region of this enormous depth is not at any time filled with the glowing prominences, and probably over the equatorial and polar regions prominences seldom attain so great a height as a hundred thousand miles, while in the spot-zones they often range far higher. Yet in the general sense in which indeed we can alone speak of the height of the complex atmosphere and of the sierra, we may say that a region of about a hundred thousand miles in height, all over the sun, is that in which the vast coloured prominences are formed and exist.

Two noteworthy discoveries have been made within the last ten years respecting the red prominences.

In the first place those over the spot-zones are found to be markedly different in character from those over the sun's equatorial and polar regions. Whereas these, though often of vast dimensions, are usually cloudlike and comparatively quiescent, those over the spot-zones often present an appearance as of being caused by mighty eruptions from the sun's interior. On one occasion, a great mass

of prominence matter one hundred thousand miles in length, observed by Prof. Young, appeared to have been torn into shreds by a mighty eruption from below, and Young watched the upward motion (or apparent motion) of these shreds (threads of gas from three hundred to one thousand miles in length), till the uppermost had reached a height of more than two hundred thousand miles from the sun's surface. Whether they really travelled to that height from their former position, some forty or fifty thousand miles above the sun's surface, at the enormous rate indicated by their apparent motion, a rate of more than a hundred miles per second, is open to doubt for reasons which I have already indicated. But it is certain, that when Prof. Young watched the gradual fading out of the luminous threads at their highest range above the sun's surface, there was glowing hydrogen at least one hundred thousand miles farther from the sun than hydrogen had ever been traced before in that condition. Hydrogen relatively far cooler appears, from observations made during total eclipses of the sun, to exist at greater heights. But never before or since has hydrogen glowed in that way at so great a distance from the sun's surface. In whatever way we explain this phenomenon we cannot doubt that it indicated the existence of a very unusual disturbance in that part of the sun which lay immediately under the apparently uprushing filaments. My own opinion is that probably not hydrogen, but masses of solid, liquid, or very highly compressed gaseous matter, was suddenly flung forth on that occasion, and that the long filaments indicated regions where these masses had swiftly rushed through the relatively cool hydrogen surrounding the sun.

But we have not yet reached the outermost solar envelope. Besides the red prominences, there can be seen, during total eclipse of the sun, the solar corona somewhat resembling the glory round the heads of saints in pictures. This is a solar appendage, or (we may more truly say perhaps) a part of the sun, which has attracted more attention from astronomers than almost any other during the last ten or twelve years.

It was shown first in 1868, that the corona consists in great part of matter which reflects the light of the sun. For the light of the corona examined with the spectroscope was found to contain all the colours of the rainbow; and though the dark lines or missing tints of the solar light were not then recognised, the circumstance was very readily explained when the difficulty of the observation (at that time) was duly taken into account. If it *had* then been proved that the light of the corona is not in the main reflected sun-light, but consists in great part of such rays as come from glowing solid or liquid matter, the inference would have been that the

substance forming the corona was raised to a white heat by the sun's rays. Although this did not seem altogether improbable, yet there are difficulties in the way of such an explanation. The scattered meteors travelling around the sun, and occupying (in this scattered way) the whole region of space where the corona appears, although they would be exposed to intense heat—a heat so intense indeed that bodies on our earth would become white hot if exposed to it—would be free to radiate so readily into space, whatever heat they received, that they would probably never become white hot right through. As the moon, having no atmosphere, or only a very rare atmosphere, becomes as hot as boiling water on the side turned towards the sun, but is colder than ice on the side turned away from him, so would meteors surrounding the sun be intensely hot on the side turned towards him, but comparatively cool on the side turned from him. Thus probably the average heat of each such meteoric mass would not be greater than that of red-hot iron. Nevertheless the intense heat to which the substance forming the sun's corona is unquestionably exposed must be remembered in considering the nature of this appendage. It is so great that the earth during a total eclipse receives an appreciable amount of heat from the corona, as Edison succeeded in showing with his wonderful heat-measuring instrument, the tasimeter, during the eclipse of last July.

In 1869, astronomers found that a portion of the light of the corona comes from glowing gas, for on the rainbow-tinted background of the corona's spectrum a bright green line was seen. It was at first supposed to be identical with a line belonging to iron, but this has been shown by more exact observations to be a mistake. The element whose presence in the corona is indicated by this bright line has not yet been ascertained. All we know respecting it is that it is gaseous. It does not follow, however, that the sun is surrounded by a gaseous envelope to the height of some half-million or so of miles. Quite possibly scattered portions of this gas, whatever it may be, are either formed in the sun's neighbourhood by his intense heat poured on solid masses travelling there, or are flung forth from his interior. Or possibly the luminosity to which this bright line is due has its origin in electric discharges between solid masses travelling near the sun, not in an absolute vacuum but in an exceedingly tenuous atmosphere.

During the eclipse of December 1870 the corona was for the first time successfully photographed by Willard, of Philadelphia, at Xerez in Spain, and by Brothers, of Manchester, at Syracuse. The photograph obtained by Brothers is one of the best we have, even to the present time. It is specially interesting on account of the enormous extension of the corona on one side.

In December 1871 six excellent photographs were obtained by Mr. Davis, who superintended the photographic operations of an observing party sent by Lord Lindsay to Baicull on the western shore of Mysore. Col. Tennant, at Ootacamund in the Neilgherry Hills (ten thousand feet above the sea level) obtained six almost equally good photographs. It was, as many readers perhaps will remember, the resemblance between the six photographs of each set, and between the two sets, which finally overthrew the theory held by some that the corona is a phenomenon of our own atmosphere, or else is something 'at the moon,' as the theorists (somewhat ungrammatically) expressed their view. A view derived from these photographs is given in the latest edition of my treatise on the sun. During the same eclipse Janssen, the French astronomer, succeeded in discerning the solar dark lines in the spectrum of the corona. In other words, he succeeded in *proving* that the coronal light is in great part reflected sunlight.

The corona till last July had been regarded as an appendage of varying extent and figure, usually somewhat radiated, and occasionally throwing out streamers to great distances, but probably nowhere exceeding two millions of miles in range outwards from the sun. It had been maintained by some (as by myself) that the observed extension of the corona is simply limited by the conditions under which eclipses are necessarily studied, the real extension being far greater. In the first edition of my treatise on the sun, written and in great part printed before the eclipse of December 1870, I remarked that 'the zodiacal light indicates the existence of a lens-shaped region around the sun within which cosmical matter is profusely strewn, and that if the zodiacal light could be traced yet farther towards the sun's place, the increase of lustre [observed towards its core and near the sun's place below the horizon] would continue, and that therefore all round the sun there would be seen a luminosity corresponding precisely with the observed aspect of the corona.' In other words, I expressed the opinion, which many at the time thought rather extravagant, that the zodiacal light is but the outer part of the solar corona. Considering that the zodiacal (for so it may more conveniently be called) extends certainly some eighty million miles from the sun, while the corona had only been traced at that time to a distance of a million miles, and was not even regarded by all astronomers as demonstrably a solar appendage, it will be understood that my opinion not only seemed to many an extravagant one, but was regarded by some as a theory which never could be submitted to any valid test.

If, however, the corona could be traced to a distance of eight

million miles in the direction of the zodiacal, the proof of connection between the two would be sufficient; for the zodiacal has been traced to within a distance of eighty million miles of the sun. I expressed my belief that this could be done, and showed how the difficulty should be attacked. If the bright inner corona were concealed from view by an interposed screen, protecting the eyes of the observer, the faint outer corona could, I said, be traced most probably to a much greater distance than heretofore, even if its extension into the zodiacal were not clearly recognised.

During the eclipse of 1870, Prof. Newcomb, of Washington, tried this method, but failed in obtaining any satisfactory result. The weather was hazy, his station not well suited for an observation of so delicate a nature, and the circumstances in other respects were unfavourable. Last July, however, Prof. Newcomb renewed the attempt at a station high above the sea level and in beautifully clear weather. He succeeded in tracing the light of the outer corona to a distance of about six degrees or some *ten million miles* from the sun. Prof. Langley, of Pittsburg (a very skilful observer of the sun), achieved a similar success. And Prof. Cleveland Abbe succeeded in tracing luminous streaks and streamers to a distance of five millions of miles.

Thus at length the gap between the corona and the zodiacal light has been completely bridged over. What was before but a probable surmise has become a demonstrated fact. The sun we see, enormous as is his bulk, is yet, so far as volume is concerned, little more than a point within the mighty volume of which he is the nucleus. Assigning to the zodiacal the figure of a flattened spheroid (like the earth's, only the flattening is far greater) having for its greatest diameter one-hundred and sixty-million miles, and for its least or axial diameter about twenty-million miles, the sun's volume is less than one eight-hundred-thousandth part of the volume of this mighty disc of cosmical matter. Albeit we must remember that the mass of the sun we see exceeds in yet greater degree that of all the material of the zodiacal disc, though the volume of this tremendous disc so enormously exceeds his.

Of this mighty system is the sun we see the nucleus. What lies below that glowing surface we do not know. But of what lies around it we have obtained some degree of knowledge, slowly and painfully, though much yet remains to be learned, and far more will ever remain unknown. Here, as in so many other departments of science, the saying of Laplace is justified, 'What we know is little, the unknown is immense.'

Bianca.

Nor long since, I was one among a crowd of nobodies at a big official reception in Paris when the Marchese and Marchesa di San Silvestro were announced. There was a momentary hush; those about the doorway fell back to let this distinguished couple pass, and some of us stood on tip-toe to get a glimpse of them; for San Silvestro is a man of no small importance in the political and diplomatic world, and his wife enjoys quite a European fame for beauty and amiability, having had opportunities of displaying both these attractive gifts at the several courts where she has acted as Italian ambassadress. They made their way quickly up the long room—she short, rather sallow, inclined towards embonpoint, but with eyes whose magnificence was rivalled only by that of her diamonds; he bald-headed, fat, grey-haired, covered with orders—and were soon out of sight. I followed them with a sigh which caused my neighbour to ask me jocosely whether the Marchesa was an old flame of mine.

‘Far from it,’ I answered. ‘Only the sight of her reminded me of bygone days. Dear, dear me! how time does slip on! It is fifteen years since I saw her last.’

I moved away, looking down rather ruefully at the waistcoat to whose circumference fifteen years have made no trifling addition, and wondering whether I was really as much altered and aged in appearance as the Marchesa was.

Fifteen years—it is no such very long time; and yet I dare say that the persons principally concerned in the incident which I am about to relate, have given up thinking about it as completely as I had done, until the sound of that lady’s name, and the sight of her big black eyes, recalled it to me, and set me thinking of the sunny spring afternoon on which my sister Anne and I journeyed from Verona to Venice, and of her naïve exclamations of delight on finding herself in a real gondola, gliding smoothly down the Grand Canal. My sister Anne is by some years my senior. She is what might be called an old lady now, and she certainly was an old maid then, and had long accepted her position as such. Then, as now, she habitually wore a grey alpaca gown, a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, gloves a couple of sizes too large for her, and a shapeless, broad-leaved straw hat, from which a blue veil was flung back and streamed out in the breeze behind her, like a ship’s

ensign. Then, as now, she was the simplest, the most kind-hearted, the most prejudiced of mortals; an enthusiastic admirer of the arts, and given, as her own small contribution thereto, to the production of endless water-colour landscapes, a trifle woolly indeed, as to outline, and somewhat faulty as to perspective, but warm in colouring, and highly thought of in the family. I believe, in fact, that it was chiefly with a view to the filling of her portfolio that she had persuaded me to take her to Venice; and, as I am constitutionally indolent, I was willing enough to spend a few weeks in the city which, of all cities in the world, is the best adapted for lazy people. We engaged rooms at Danielli's, and unpacked all our clothes, knowing that we were not likely to make another move until the heat should drive us away.

The first few days, I remember, were not altogether full of enjoyment for one of us. My excellent Anne, who has all her brother's virtues, without his failings, would have scouted the notion of allowing any dread of physical fatigue to stand between her and the churches and pictures which she had come all the way from England to admire; and, as Venice was an old haunt of mine, she very excusably expected me to act as cicerone to her, and allowed me but little rest between the hours of breakfast and of the table-d'hôte. At last, however, she conceived the modest and felicitous idea of making a copy of Titian's 'Assumption,' and, having obtained the requisite permission for that purpose, set to work upon the first of a long series of courageous attempts, all of which she conscientiously destroyed when in a half-finished state. At that rate it seemed likely that her days would be fully occupied for some weeks to come; and I urged her to persevere, and not to allow herself to be disheartened by a few brilliant failures; and so she hurried away, early every morning, with her paint-box, her brushes, and her block, and I was left free to smoke my cigarettes in peace, in front of my favourite café on the Piazza San Marco.

I was sitting there one morning, watching, with half-closed eyes, the pigeons circling overhead under a cloudless sky, and enjoying the fresh salt breeze that came across the ruffled water from the Adriatic, when I was accosted by one of the white-coated Austrian officers by whom Venice was thronged in those days, and whom I presently recognised as a young fellow named von Rosenau whom I had known slightly in Vienna the previous winter. I returned his greeting cordially, for I always like to associate as much as possible with foreigners when I am abroad, and little did I foresee into what trouble this fair-haired, innocent-looking youth was destined to lead me.

I asked him how he liked Venice, and he answered laughingly that he was not there from choice. 'I am in disgrace,' he explained. 'I am always in disgrace—only this time it is rather worse than usual. Do you remember my father, the General? No? Perhaps he was not in Vienna when you were there. He is a soldier of the old school, and manages his family as they tell me he used to manage his regiment in former years, boasting that he has never allowed a breach of discipline to pass unpunished, and never will. Last year I exceeded my allowance, and the Colonel got orders to stop my leave; this year I borrowed from the Jews, the whole thing was found out, and I was removed from the cavalry, and put into a Croat regiment under orders for Venice. Next year will probably see me enrolled in the police; and so it will go on, I suppose, till some fine morning I shall find myself driving a two-horse yellow diligence in the wilds of Carinthia, and blowing a horn to let the villagers know that the Imperial and Royal mail is approaching.'

After a little more conversation we separated, but only to meet again, that same evening, on the Piazza San Marco, whither I had wandered to listen to the band after dinner, and where I found von Rosenau seated with a number of his brother-officers in front of the principal café. These gentlemen, to whom I was presently introduced, were unanimous in complaining of their present quarters. Venice, they said, might be all very well for artists and travellers; but viewed as a garrison, it was the dullest of places. There were no amusements, there was no sport, and just now no society; for the Italians were in one of their periodical fits of sulks, and would not speak to, or look at, a German if they could possibly avoid it.

'They will not even show themselves when our band is playing,' said one of the officers, pointing towards the well-nigh empty piazza. 'As for the ladies, it is reported that, if one of them is seen speaking to an Austrian, she is either assassinated or sent off to spend the rest of her days in a convent. At all events, it is certain that we have none of us any successes to boast off, except von Rosenau, who has an affair, they say, only he is pleased to be very mysterious about it.'

'Where does she live, von Rosenau?' asked another. 'Is she rich? Is she noble? Has she a husband, who will stab you both? or only a mother, who will send her to a nunnery, and let you go free? You might gratify our curiosity a little. It would do you no harm, and it would give us something to talk about.'

'Bah! he will tell you nothing,' cried a third. 'He is afraid. He knows that there are half a dozen of us who could cut him out in an hour.'

'Von Rosenau,' said a young ensign solemnly, 'you would do better to make a clean breast of it. Concealment is useless. Janovicz saw you with her in Santa Maria della Salute the other day, and could have followed her home quite easily if he had been so inclined.'

'They were seen together on the Lido too. People who want to keep their secrets ought not to be so imprudent.'

'A good comrade ought to have no secrets from the regiment.'

'Come, von Rosenau, we will promise not to speak to her without your permission if you will tell us how you managed to make her acquaintance.'

The subject of all these attacks received them with the most perfect composure, continuing to smoke his cigar and gaze out seawards, without so much as turning his head towards his questioners, to whom he vouchsafed no reply whatever. Probably, as an ex-hussar and a sprig of nobility, he may have held his head a little above those of his present brother-officers, and preferred disregarding their familiarity to resenting it as he might have done if it had come from men whom he considered on a footing of equality with himself. Such, at least, was my impression; and it was confirmed by the friendly advances which he made towards me, from that day forth, and by the persistency with which he sought my society. I thought he seemed to wish for some companion whose ideas had not been developed exclusively in barrack atmosphere; and I, on my side, was not unwilling to listen to the chatter of a lively, good-natured young fellow, at intervals, during my long, idle days.

It was at the end of a week, I think, or thereabouts, that he honoured me with his full confidence. We had been out sea-fishing in a small open boat which he had purchased, and which he managed without assistance—that is to say, that we had provided ourselves with what was requisite for the pursuit of that engrossing sport, and that the young Count had gone through the form of dropping his line over the side and pulling it up, baitless and fishless, from time to time, while I had dispensed with even this shallow pretence of employment, and had stretched myself out full length upon the cushions which I had thoughtfully brought with me, inhaling the salt-laden breeze, and luxuriating in perfect inaction, till such time as it had become necessary for us to think of returning homewards. My companion had been sighing portentously every now and again all through the afternoon, and had repeatedly given vent to a sound as though he had been about to say something, and had as often checked himself, and fallen back into silence. So that I was in a great measure prepared for the dis-

closure that fell from him at length as we slipped before the wind, across the broad lagoon, towards the haze and blaze of sunset which was glorifying the old city of the Doges.

‘Do you know,’ said he suddenly, ‘that I am desperately in love?’ I said I had conjectured as much; and he seemed a good deal surprised at my powers of divination.

‘Yes,’ he resumed, ‘I am in love; and with an Italian lady too, unfortunately. Her name is Bianca—the Signorina Bianca Marinelli—and she is the most divinely beautiful creature the sun ever shone upon.’

‘That,’ said I, ‘is of course.’

‘It is the truth; and when you have seen her, you will acknowledge that I do not exaggerate. I have known her nearly two months now. I became acquainted with her accidentally—she dropped her handkerchief in a shop, and I took it to her, and so we got to be upon speaking terms, and—and—but I need not give you the whole history. We have discovered that we are all the world to one another; we have sworn to remain faithful to each other all our lives long; and we renew the oath whenever we meet. But that, unhappily, is very seldom! for her father, the Marchese Marinelli, scarcely ever lets her out of his sight; and he is a sour, narrow-minded old fellow, as proud as he is poor, an intense hater of all Austrians, and, if he were to discover our attachment, I shudder to think of what the consequences might be.’

‘And your own father—the stern old General of whom you told me—what would he say to it all?’

‘Oh! he, of course, would not hear of such a marriage for a moment. He detests and despises the Venetians as cordially as the Marchese abhors the *Tedeschi*; and, as I am entirely dependent upon him, I should not dream of saying a word to him about the matter until I was married, and nothing could be done to separate me from Bianca.’

‘So that, upon the whole, you appear to stand a very fair chance of starvation, if everything turns out according to your wishes. And pray in what way do you imagine that I can assist you towards this desirable end? For I take it for granted that you have some reason for letting me into your secret.’

Von Rosenau laughed good-humouredly.

‘You form conclusions quickly,’ he said. ‘Well, I will confess to you that I have thought lately that you might be of great service to me without inconveniencing yourself much. The other day, when you did me the honour to introduce me to your sister, I was very nearly telling her all. She has such a kind countenance; and I felt sure that she would not refuse to let my poor Bianca

visit her sometimes. The old Marchese, you see, would have no objection to leaving his daughter for hours under the care of an English lady; and I thought that perhaps when Miss Jenkinson went out to work at her painting—I might come in.'

'Fortunate indeed is it for you,' I said, 'that your confidence in the kind countenance of my sister Anne did not carry you quite to the point of divulging this precious scheme to her. I, who know her pretty well, can tell you exactly the course she would have pursued if you had. Without one moment's hesitation, she would have found out the address of the young lady's father, hurried off thither, and told him all about it. Anne is a thoroughly good creature; but she has little sympathy with love-making, still less with surreptitious love-making, and she would as soon think of accepting the part you are so good as to assign to her as of forging a cheque.'

He sighed, and said he supposed, then, that they must continue to meet as they had been in the habit of doing; but that it was rather unsatisfactory.

'It says something for your ingenuity, that you contrive to meet at all,' I remarked.

'Well, yes, there are considerable difficulties, because the old man's movements are so uncertain; and there is some risk too, for, as you heard the other day, we have been seen together. Moreover I have been obliged to tell everything to my servant Johann, who waylays the Marchese's housekeeper at market in the mornings, and finds out from her when and where I can have an opportunity of meeting Bianca. I would rather not have trusted him; but I could think of no other plan.'

'At any rate, I should have thought you might have selected some more retired rendezvous than the most frequented church in Venice.'

He shrugged his shoulders. 'I wish you would suggest one within reach,' he said. 'There are no retired places in this accursed town. But, in fact, we see one another very seldom. Often for days together the only way in which I can get a glimpse of her is by loitering about in my boat in front of her father's house, and watching till she shows herself at the window. We are in her neighbourhood now, and it is close upon the hour at which I can generally calculate upon her appearing. Would you mind my making a short *détour* that way before I set you down at your hotel?'

We had entered the Grand Canal while von Rosenau had been relating his love-tale, and, some minutes before, he had lowered his sail, and taken to the oars. He now slewed the boat's head round

abruptly, and we shot into a dark and narrow water-way, and so, after sundry twistings and turnings, arrived before a grim, time-worn structure, so hemmed in by the surrounding buildings that it seemed as if no ray of sunshine could ever penetrate within its walls.

‘That is the Palazzo Marinelli,’ said my companion. ‘The greater part of it is let to different tenants. The family has long been much too poor to inhabit the whole of it, and now the old man only reserves himself four rooms on the third floor. Those are the windows, in the far corner; and there—no!—yes! there is Bianca.’

I brought my eye-glass to bear upon the point indicated just in time to catch sight of a female head, which was thrust out through the open window for an instant, and then withdrawn with great celerity.

‘Ah!’ sighed the Count, ‘it is you who have driven her away. I ought to have remembered that she would be frightened at seeing a stranger. And now she will not show herself again, I fear. Come; I will take you home. Confess now—is she not more beautiful than you expected?’

‘My dear sir, I had hardly time to see whether she was a man or a woman; but I am quite willing to take your word for it that there never was anybody like her.’

‘If you would like to wait a little longer—half an hour or so—she *might* put her head out again,’ said the young man wistfully.

‘Thank you very much; but my sister will be wondering why I do not come to take her down to the table-d’hôte. And besides, as I am not in love myself, I may perhaps be excused for saying that I want my dinner.’

‘As you please,’ answered the Count, looking the least bit in the world affronted; and so he pulled back in silence to the steps of the hotel, where we parted.

I don’t know whether von Rosenau felt aggrieved by my rather unsympathetic reception of his confidence, or whether he thought it useless to discuss his projects further with one who could not or would not assist him in carrying them out; but although we continued to meet daily, as before, he did not recur to the interesting subject, and it was not for me to take the initiative in doing so. Curiosity, I confess, led me to direct my gondolier more than once to the narrow canal over which the Palazzo Marinelli towered; and on each occasion I was rewarded by descrying, from the depths of the miniature mourning-coach which concealed me, the faithful Count, seated in his boat and waiting in patient faith, like another

Ritter Toggenburg, with his eyes fixed upon the corner window; but of the lady I could see no sign. I was rather disappointed at first, as day after day went by and my young friend showed no disposition to break the silence in which he had chosen to wrap himself; for I had nothing to do in Venice, and I thought it would have been rather amusing to watch the progress of this incipient romance. By degrees, however, I ceased to trouble myself about it; and at the end of a fortnight I had other things to think of, in the shape of plans for the summer, my sister Anne having by that time satisfied herself that, all things considered, Titian's 'Assumption' was a little too much for her.

It was Captain Janovicz who informed me casually one evening that von Rosenau was going away in a few days on leave, and that he would probably be absent for a considerable time.

'For my own part,' remarked my informant, 'I shall be surprised if we see him back in the regiment at all. He was only sent to us as a sort of punishment for having been a naughty boy, and I suppose now he will be forgiven, and restored to the hussars.'

'So much for undying love,' thinks I with a cynical chuckle. 'If there is any gratitude in man, that young fellow ought to be showering blessings on me for having refused to hold the noose for him to thrust his head into.'

Alas! I knew not of what I was speaking. I had not yet heard the last of Herr von Rosenau's entanglement, nor was I destined to escape from playing my part in it. The very next morning, after breakfast, as I was poring over a map of Switzerland, Murray on my right hand and Bradshaw on my left, his card was brought to me, together with an urgent request that I would see him immediately and alone; and before I had had time to send a reply, he came clattering into the room, trailing his sabre behind him, and dropped into the first arm-chair with a despairing self-abandonment which shook the house to its foundations.

'Mr. Jenkinson,' said he, 'I am a ruined man!'

I answered rather drily that I was very sorry to hear it. If I must confess the truth, I thought he had come to borrow money of me.

'A most cruel calamity has befallen me,' he went on; 'and unless you will consent to help me out of it——'

'I am sure I shall be delighted to do anything in my power,' I interrupted apprehensively; 'but I am afraid——'

'You cannot refuse me till you have heard what I have to say. I am aware that I have no claim whatever upon your kindness; but you are the only man in the world who can save me, and, whereas the happiness of my whole life is at stake, the utmost you

can have to put up with will be a little inconvenience. Now I will explain myself in as few words as possible, because I have only a minute to spare. In fact, I ought to be out on the ramparts at this moment. You have not forgotten what I told you about myself and the Signorina Marinelli, and how we had agreed to seize the first opportunity that offered to be privately married, and to escape over the mountains to my father's house, and throw ourselves upon his mercy ?'

'I don't remember your having mentioned any such plan.'

'No matter—so it was. Well, everything seemed to have fallen out most fortunately for us. I found out some time ago that the Marchese would be going over to Padua this evening, on business, and would be absent at least one whole day, and I immediately applied for my leave to begin to-morrow. This I obtained at once through my father, who now expects me to be with him in a few days, and little knows that I shall not come alone. Johann and the Marchese's housekeeper arranged the rest between them. I was to meet my dear Bianca early in the morning on the Lido; thence we were to go by boat to Mestre, where a carriage was to be in waiting for us; and the same evening we were to be married by a priest, to whom I have given due notice, at a place called Longarone. And so we should have gone on, across the Ampezzo Pass homewards. Now, would you believe that all has been defeated by a mere freak on the part of my Colonel? Only this morning, after it was much too late to make any alteration in our plans, he told me that he should require me to be on duty all to-day and to-morrow, and that my leave could not begin until the next day. Is it not maddening? And the worst of it is, that I have no means of letting Bianca know of this, for I dare not send a message to the Palazzo, and there is no chance of my seeing her myself; and of course she will go to the Lido to-morrow morning, and will find no one there. Now, my dear Mr. Jenkinson—my good, kind friend—do you begin to see what I want you to do for me?'

'Not in the very least.'

'No? But it is evident enough. Now listen. You meet Bianca to-morrow morning, you explain to her what has happened, you take her in the boat, which will be waiting for you, to Mestre; you proceed in the travelling-carriage, which will also be waiting for you, to Longarone; you see the priest, and appoint with him for the following evening; and the next day I arrive, and you return to Venice. Is that clear?'

The volubility with which this programme was enunciated so took away my breath that I scarcely realised its audacity.

'You will not refuse; I am sure you will not,' said the Count, rising and hooking up his sword, as if about to depart.

'Stop, stop!' I exclaimed. 'You don't consider what you are asking. I can't elope with young women in this casual sort of way. I have a character—and a sister. How am I to explain all this to my sister, I should like to know?'

'Oh! make any excuse you can think of to her. Now, Mr. Jenkinson, you know there cannot be any real difficulty in that. You consent, then? A thousand, thousand thanks! I will send you a few more instructions by letter this evening. I really must not stay any longer now. Good-bye.'

'Stop! Why can't your servant Johann do all this instead of me?'

'Because he is on duty like myself. Good-bye.'

'Stop! Why can't you postpone your flight for a day? I don't so much mind meeting the young lady and telling her all about it.'

'Quite out of the question, my dear sir. It is perfectly possible that the Marchese may return from Padua to-morrow night, and what should we do then? No, no; there is no help for it. Good-bye.'

'Stop! Hi! Come back!'

But it was too late. My impetuous visitor was down the staircase and away before I had descended a single flight in pursuit, and all I could do was to return to my room and register a vow within my own heart that I would have nothing to do with this preposterous scheme.

Looking back upon what followed across the interval of fifteen years, I find that I can really give no satisfactory reason for my having failed to adhere to this wise resolution. I had no particular feeling of friendship for von Rosenau; I did not care two straws about the Signorina Bianca, whom I had never seen; and certainly I am not, nor ever was, the sort of person who loves romantic adventures for their own sake. Perhaps it was good nature, perhaps it was only an indolent shrinking from disobliging anybody, that influenced me—it does not much matter now. Whatever the cause of my yielding may have been, I did yield. I prefer to pass over in silence the doubts and hesitations which beset me for the remainder of the day; the arrival, towards evening, of the piteous note from von Rosenau which finally overcame my weak resistance to his will; and the series of circumstantial false statements (I blush when I think of them) by means of which I accounted to my sister for my proposed sudden departure.

Suffice it to say that, very early on the following morning, there

might have been seen, pacing up and down the shore on the seaward side of the Lido, and peering anxiously about him through an eye-glass, as if in search of somebody or something, the figure of a tall spare Englishman, clad in a complete suit of shepherd's tartan, with a wide-awake on his head, a leather bag slung by a strap across his shoulder, and a light coat over his arm. Myself, in point of fact, in the travelling costume of the epoch.

I was kept waiting a long time—longer than I liked; for, as may be supposed, I was most anxious to be well away from Venice before the rest as the world was up and about; but at length there appeared, round the corner of a long white wall which skirted the beach, a little lady thickly veiled, who, on catching sight of me, whisked round, and incontinently vanished. This was so evidently the fair Bianca that I followed her without hesitation, and almost ran into her arms as I swung round the angle of the wall behind which she had retreated. She gave a great start, stared at me, for an instant, like a startled fawn, and then took to her heels and fled. It was rather ridiculous; but there was nothing for me to do but to give chase. My legs are long, and I had soon headed her round.

'I presume that I have the honour of addressing the Signorina Marinelli?' I panted, in French, as I faced her, hat in hand.

She answered me by a piercing shriek which left no room for doubt as to her identity.

'For the love of Heaven, don't do that!' I entreated, in an agony. 'You will alarm the whole neighbourhood, and ruin us both. Believe me, I am only here as your friend, and very much against my own wishes. I have come on the part of Count Albrecht von Rosenau, who is unable to come himself, because——'

Here she opened her mouth with so manifest an intention of raising another resounding screech that I became desperate, and seized her by the wrists in my anxiety. '*Sgridi ancora una volta,*' says I, in the purest *lingua Toscana*; '*e la lascerò qui—to get out of this mess as best you can—così sicuro che il mio nome è Jenkinsono!*'

To my great relief, she began to laugh. Immediately afterwards, however, she sat down on the shingle, and began to cry. It was too vexatious: what on earth was I to do?

'Do you understand English?' I asked despairingly.

She shook her head, but sobbed out that she spoke French; so I proceeded to address her in that language.

'Signorina, if you do not get up, and control your emotion, I will not be answerable for the consequences. We are surrounded

by dangers of the most—compromising description; and every moment of delay must add to them. I know that the officers often come out here to bathe in the morning—so do many of the English people from Danielli's. If we are discovered together there will be such a scandal as never was, and you will most assuredly not become Countess von Rosenau. Think of that, and it will brace your nerves. What you have to do is to come directly with me to the boat which is all ready to take us to Mestre. Allow me to carry your hand-bag.'

Not a bit of it! The Signorina refused to stir.

'What is it? Where is Alberto? What has happened?' she cried. 'You have told me nothing.'

'Well then, I will explain,' I answered impatiently. And I explained accordingly.

But, dear me, what a fuss she did make over it all! One would have supposed, to hear her, that I had planned this unfortunate complication for my own pleasure, and that I ought to have been playing the part of a suppliant instead of that of a sorely-tried benefactor. First she was so kind as to set me down as an impostor, and was only convinced of my honesty when I showed her a letter in the beloved Alberto's handwriting. Then she declared that she could not possibly go off with a total stranger. Then she discovered that, upon further consideration, she could not abandon poor dear papa in his old age. And so forth, and so forth, with a running accompaniment of tears and sobs. Of course she consented at last to enter the boat; but I was so exasperated by her silly behaviour that I would not speak to her, and had really scarcely noticed whether she was pretty or plain till we were more than half way to Mestre. But when we had hoisted our sail, and were running before a fine fresh breeze towards the land, and our four men had shipped their oars and were chattering and laughing under their breath in the bows, and the first perils of our enterprise seemed to have been safely surmounted, my equanimity began to return to me, and I stole a glance at the partner of my flight, who had lifted her veil, and showed a pretty, round, childish face, with a clear, brown complexion, and a pair of the most splendid dark eyes it has ever been my good fortune to behold. There were no tears in them now; but a certain half-frightened, half-mischievous light instead, as if she rather enjoyed the adventure, in spite of its inauspicious opening. A very little encouragement induced her to enter into conversation, and ere long she was prattling away as unrestrainedly as if we had been friends all our lives. She asked me a great many questions. What was I doing in Venice? Had I known Alberto long? Was I very fond of him? Did I think that

the old Count von Rosenau would be very angry when he heard of his son's marriage? I answered her as best I could, feeling very sorry for the poor little soul, who evidently did not in the least realise the serious nature of the step which she was about to take; and she grew more and more communicative. In the course of a quarter of an hour I had been put in possession of all the chief incidents of her uneventful life.

I had heard how she had lost her mother when she was still an infant; how she had been educated partly by two maiden aunts, partly in a convent at Verona; how she had latterly led a life of almost complete seclusion in the old Venetian palace; how she had first met Alberto; and how, after many doubts and misgivings, she had finally been prevailed upon to sacrifice all for his sake, and to leave her father, who, stern, severe, and suspicious, though he had always been generous to her, had tried to give her such small pleasures as his means and habits would permit. She had a likeness of him with her, she said—perhaps I might like to see it. She dived into her travelling-bag, as she spoke, and produced from thence a full-length photograph of a tall, well-built gentleman of sixty, or thereabouts, whose grey hair, black moustache, and intent, frowning gaze made up an ensemble more striking than attractive.

'Is he not handsome—poor papa?' she asked.

I said the Marchese was certainly a very fine-looking man, and inwardly thanked my stars that he was safely at Padua; for looking at the breadth of his chest, the length of his arm, and the somewhat forbidding cast of his features, I could not help perceiving that poor papa was precisely one of those persons with whom a prudent man prefers to keep friends than to quarrel.

And so, by the time that we reached Mestre, we had become quite friendly and intimate, and had half forgotten, I think, the absurd relation in which we stood towards one another. We had rather an awkward moment when we left the boat and entered our travelling-carriage; for I need scarcely say that both the boatmen and the grinning vetturino took me for the bridegroom, whose place I temporarily occupied, and they were pleased to be facetious in a manner which was very embarrassing to me, but which I could not very well check. Moreover, I felt compelled so far to sustain my assumed character as to be specially generous in the matter of a *buona mano* to those four jolly watermen, and, for the first few miles of our drive, I could not help remembering this circumstance with some regret, and wondering whether it would occur to von Rosenau to reimburse me.

Probably our coachman thought that, having a runaway couple

to drive, he ought to make some pretence at least of fearing pursuit; for he set off at such a furious pace that our four half-starved horses were soon beat, and we had to perform the remainder of the long, hot, dusty journey at a foot's pace. I have forgotten how we made the time pass. I think we slept a good deal. I know we were both very tired, and a trifle cross, when, in the evening we reached Longarone, a small, poverty-stricken village, on the verge of that Dolomite region which, in these latter days, has become so frequented by summer tourists.

Tourists usually leave in their wake some of the advantages as well as the drawbacks of civilisation; and probably there is now a respectable hotel at Longarone. I suppose, therefore, that I may say, without risk of laying myself open to an action for slander, that a more filthy den than the osteria before which my charge and I alighted no imagination, however disordered, could conceive. It was a vast, dismal building which had doubtless been the palace of some rich citizen of the Republic in days of yore, but which had now fallen into a dishonoured old age. Its windows and outside shutters were tightly closed, and had been so, apparently, from time immemorial; a vile smell of rancid oil and garlic pervaded it in every part; the cornices of its huge, bare rooms were festooned with blackened cobwebs; and the dust and dirt of ages had been suffered to accumulate upon the stone floors of its corridors. The Signorina tucked up her petticoats as she picked her way along the passages to her bedroom, while I remained behind to order dinner of the sulky, black-browed padrona, to whom I had already had to explain that my companion and I were not man and wife, and who, I fear, had consequently conceived no very high opinion of us. Happily the priest had already been warned by telegram that his service would not be required until the morrow; so I was spared the nuisance of an interview with him.

After a time we sat down to our *tête-à-tête* dinner. Such a dinner! Even after the lapse of all these years I am unable to think of it without a shudder. Half famished though we were, we could not do much more than look at the greater part of the dishes which were set before us; and the climax was reached when we were served with an astonishing *compote*, made up, so far as I was able to judge, of equal proportions of preserved plums and mustard, to which vinegar and sugar had been superadded. Both the Signorina and I partook of this horrible mixture, for it really looked as if it might be rather nice; and when, after the first mouthful, each of us looked up, and saw the other's face of agony and alarm, we burst into a simultaneous peal of laughter. Up to

that moment we had been very solemn and depressed; but the laugh did us good, and sent us to bed in somewhat better spirits; and the malignant *compote* at least did us the service of effectually banishing our appetite.

I forbear to enlarge upon the horrors of the night. Mosquitoes, and other insects, which, for some reason or other, we English seldom mention, save under a modest pseudonym, worked their wicked will upon me till daybreak set me free; and I presume that the fair Bianca was no better off; for when the breakfast hour arrived, I received a message from her to the effect that she was unable to leave her room.

I was sitting over my dreary little repast, wondering how I should get through the day, and speculating upon the possibility of my release before night-fall, and I had just concluded that I must make up my mind to face another night with the mosquitoes and their hardy allies, when, to my great joy, a slatternly serving-maid came lolloping into the room, and announced that a gentleman styling himself 'Il Conte di Rosenau' had arrived and demanded to see me instantly. Here was a piece of unlooked-for good fortune! I jumped up, and flew to the door to receive my friend, whose footsteps I already heard on the threshold.

'My dear, good soul!' I cried, 'this is too delightful! How did you manage——'

The remainder of my sentence died away upon my lips; for alas! it was not the missing Alberto whom I had nearly embraced, but a stout, red-faced, white-moustached gentleman, who was in a violent passion, judging by the terrific salute of Teutonic expletives with which he greeted my advance. Then he, too, desisted as suddenly as I had done, and we both fell back a few paces, and stared at one another blankly. The new comer was the first to recover himself.

'This is some accursed mistake,' said he, in German.

'Evidently,' said I.

'But they told me that you and an Italian young lady were the only strangers in the house.'

'Well, sir,' I said, 'I can't help it if we are. The house is not of a kind likely to attract strangers; and I assure you that, if I could consult my own wishes, the number of the guests would soon be reduced by one.'

He appeared to be a very choleric old person. 'Sir,' said he, 'you seem disposed to carry things off with a high hand; but I suspect that you know more than you choose to reveal. Be so good as to tell me the name of the lady who is staying here.'

‘I think you are forgetting yourself,’ I answered, with dignity. ‘I must decline to gratify your curiosity.’

He stuck his arms akimbo, and planted himself directly in front of me, frowning ominously. ‘Let us waste no more words,’ he said. ‘If I have made a mistake, I shall be ready to offer you a full apology. If not—but that is nothing to the purpose. I am Lieutenant-General Graf von Rosenau, at your service, and I have reason to believe that my son, Graf Albrecht von Rosenau, a lieutenant in his Imperial and Royal Majesty’s 99th Croat regiment, has made a runaway match with a certain Signorina Bianca Marinelli of Venice. Are you prepared to give me your word of honour as a gentleman and an Englishman that you are not privy to this affair?’

At these terrible words I felt my blood run cold. I may have lost my presence of mind; but I don’t know how I could have got out of the dilemma even if I had preserved it.

‘Your son has not yet arrived,’ I stammered.

He pounced upon me like a cat upon a mouse, and gripped both my arms above the elbow. ‘Is he married?’ he hissed, with his red nose a couple of inches from mine.

‘No,’ I answered, ‘he is not. Perhaps I had better say at once that if you use personal violence I shall defend myself in spite of your age.’

Upon this he was kind enough to relax his hold.

‘And pray, sir,’ he resumed, in a somewhat more temperate tone, after a short period of reflection, ‘what have you to do with all this?’

‘I am not bound to answer your questions, Herr Graf,’ I replied; ‘but, as things have turned out, I have no special objection to doing so. Out of pure good nature to your son, who was detained by duty in Venice at the last moment, I consented to bring the Signorina Marinelli here yesterday, and to await his arrival, which I am now expecting.’

‘So you ran away with the girl, instead of Albrecht, did you? Ho, ho, ho!’

I had seldom heard a more grating or disagreeable laugh.

‘I did nothing of the sort,’ I answered tartly. ‘I simply undertook to see her safely through the first stage of her journey.’

‘And you will have the pleasure of seeing her back, I imagine; for as for my rascal of a boy, I mean to take him off home with me as soon as he arrives; and I can assure you that I have no intention of providing myself with a daughter-in-law in the course of the day.’

I began to feel not a little alarmed. ‘You cannot have the

brutality to leave me here with a young woman whom I am scarcely so much as acquainted with on my hands!' I ejaculated, half involuntarily. 'What in the world should I do?'

The old gentleman gave vent to a malevolent chuckle. 'Upon my word, sir,' said he, 'I can only see one course open to you as a man of honour. You must marry her yourself.'

At this I fairly lost all patience, and gave the Graf my opinion of his conduct in terms the plainness of which left nothing to be desired. I included him, his son, and the entire German people in one sweeping anathema. No Englishman, I said, would have been capable of either insulting an innocent lady, or of so basely leaving in the lurch one whose only fault had been a too great readiness to sacrifice his own convenience to the interests of others. My indignation lent me a flow of words such as I should never have been able to command in calmer moments; and I daresay I should have continued in the same strain for an indefinite time, had I not been summarily cut short by the entrance of a third person.

There was no occasion for this last intruder to announce himself, in a voice of thunder, as the Marchese Marinelli. I had at once recognised the original of the Signorina's photograph, and I perceived that I was now in about as uncomfortable a position as my bitterest enemy could have desired for me. The German old gentleman had been very angry at the outset; but his wrath, as compared with that of the Italian, was as a breeze to a hurricane. The Marchese was literally quivering from head to foot with concentrated fury. His face was deadly white, his strongly-marked features twitched convulsively, his eyes blazed like those of a wild animal. Having stated his identity in the manner already referred to, he made two strides towards the table by which I was seated, and stood glaring at me as though he would have sprung at my throat. I thought it might avert consequences which we should both afterwards deplore if I were to place the table between us; and I did so without loss of time. From the other side of that barrier I adjured my visitor to keep cool, pledging him my word, in the same breath, that there was no harm done as yet.

'No harm!' he repeated, in a strident shout that echoed through the bare room. 'Dog! Villain! You ensnare my daughter's affections—you entice her away from her father's house—you cover my family with eternal disgrace—and then you dare to tell me there is no harm done! Wait a little, and you shall see that there will be harm enough for you. Marry her you must, since you have ruined her; but you shall die for it the next day! It is I—I, Ludovico Marinelli—who swear it!'

I am aware that I do but scant justice to the Marchese's in-

imitable style. The above sentences must be imagined as hurled forth in a series of yells, with a pant between each of them. As a melodramatic actor, this terrific Marinelli would, I am sure, have risen to the first rank in his profession.

‘Signore,’ I said, ‘you are under a misapprehension. I have ensnared nobody’s affections, and I am entirely guiltless of all the crimes which you are pleased to attribute to me.’

‘What? Are you not, then, the hound who bears the vile and dishonoured name of von Rosenau?’

‘I am not. I bear the less distinguished, but, I hope, equally respectable patronymic of Jenkinson.’

But my modest disclaimer passed unheeded, for now another combatant had thrown himself into the fray.

‘Vile and dishonoured name! No one shall permit himself such language in my presence. I am Lieutenant-General Graf von Rosenau, sir, and you shall answer to me for your words.’

The Herr Graf’s knowledge of Italian was somewhat limited; but, such as it was, it had enabled him to catch the sense of the stigma cast upon his family, and now he was upon his feet, red and gobbling, like a turkey-cock, and prepared to do battle with a hundred irate Venetians, if need were.

The Marchese stared at him in blank amazement. ‘*You!*’ he ejaculated—‘You von Rosenau! It is incredible—preposterous. Why, you are old enough to be her grandfather.’

‘Not old enough to be in my dotage—as I should be, if I permitted my son to marry a beggarly Italian—nor too old to punish impertinence as it deserves,’ retorted the Graf.

‘Your son? You are the father then? It is all the same to me. I will fight you both. But the marriage shall take place first.’

‘It shall not.’

‘It shall.’

‘Insolent slave of an Italian, I will make you eat your words!’

‘Triple brute of a German, I spit upon you!’

‘Silence, sir!’

‘Silence yourself!’

During this animated dialogue I sat apart, softly rubbing my hands. What a happy dispensation it would be, I could not help thinking, if these two old madmen were to exterminate one another, like the Kilkenny cats! Anyhow their attention was effectually diverted from my humble person, and that was something to be thankful for.

Never before had I been privileged to listen to so rich a voca-

bulary of vituperation. Each disputant had expressed himself, after the first few words, in his own language, and between them they were now making hubbub enough to bring the old house down about their ears. Up came the padrona to see the fun; up came her fat husband, in his shirt-sleeves and slippers; and her long-legged sons, and her touzle-headed daughters, and the maid-servant, and the cook, and the ostler—the whole establishment, in fact, collected at the open folding-doors, and watched with delight the progress of this battle of words. Last of all, a poor little trembling figure, with pale face and eyes big with fright, crept in, and stood, hand on heart, a little in advance of the group. I slipped to her side, and offered her a chair, but she neither answered me nor noticed my presence. She was staring at her father as a bird stares at a snake, and seemed unable to realise anything except the terrible fact that he had followed and found her.

Presently the old man wheeled round, and became aware of his daughter.

‘Unhappy girl!’ he exclaimed, ‘what is this that you have done?’

I greatly fear that the Marchese’s paternal corrections must have sometimes taken a more practical shape than mere verbal up-braidings; for poor Bianca shrank back, throwing up one arm, as if to shield her face, and, with a wild cry of ‘Alberto! Come to me!’ fell into the arms of that tardy lover, who at this appropriate moment had made his appearance, unobserved, upon the scene.

The polyglot disturbance that ensued baffles all description. Indeed, I should be puzzled to say exactly what took place, or after how many commands, defiance, threats, protestations, insults, and explanations, a semblance of peace was finally restored. I only know that, at the expiration of a certain time, three of us were sitting by the open window, in a softened and subdued frame of mind, considerably turning our backs upon the other two, who were bidding one another farewell at the farther end of the room.

It was the faithless Johann, as I gathered, who was responsible for this catastrophe. His heart, it appeared, had failed him when he had discovered that nothing less than a bonâ-fide marriage was to be the outcome of the meetings he had shown so much skill in contriving, and full of penitence and alarm, he had written to his old master, divulging the whole project. It so happened that a recent storm in the mountains had interrupted telegraphic communication, for the time, between Austria and Venice, and the only course that had seemed open to Herr von Rosenau was to start post-haste for the latter place, where, indeed, he would have arrived

a day too late, had not Albrecht's Colonel seen fit to postpone his leave. In this latter circumstance also the hand of Johann seemed discernible. As for the Marchese, I suppose he must have returned rather sooner than had been expected from Padua, and finding his daughter gone, must have extorted the truth from his housekeeper. He did not volunteer any explanation of his presence, nor were any of us bold enough to question him.

As I have said before, I have no very clear recollection of how an understanding was arrived at, and bloodshed averted and the padrona and her satellites hustled downstairs again. Perhaps I may have had some share in the work of pacification. Be that as it may, when once the exasperated parents had discovered that they both really wanted the same thing—namely, to recover possession of their respective offspring, to go home, and never meet one another again—a species of truce was soon agreed upon between them for the purpose of separating the two lovers, who all this time were locked in one another's arms, in the prettiest attitude in the world, vowing loudly that nothing should ever part them.

How often since the world began have such vows been made and broken—broken, not willingly but of necessity—broken and mourned over, and, in due course of time, forgotten! I looked at the Marchesa di San Silvestro the other night, as she sailed up the room in her lace and diamonds, with her fat little husband toddling after her, and wondered whether, in these days of her magnificence, she ever gave a thought to her lost Alberto—Alberto, who has been married himself this many a long day, and has succeeded to his father's estates, and has a numerous family, I am told. At all events, she was unhappy enough over parting with him at the time. The two old gentlemen who, as holders of the purse-strings, knew that they were completely masters of the situation, and could afford to be generous, showed some kindness of feeling at the last. They allowed the poor lovers an uninterrupted half hour in which to bid one another adieu for ever, and abstained from any needless harshness in making their decision known. When the time was up, two travelling-carriages were seen waiting at the door. Count von Rosenau pushed his son before him into the first; the Marchese assisted the half-fainting Bianca into the second: the vetturini cracked their whips, and presently both vehicles were rolling away, the one towards the north, the other towards the south. I suppose the young people had been promising to remain faithful to one another until some happier future time should permit of their union, for at the last moment Albrecht thrust his head out of the carriage window, and, waving his hand, cried, 'A rivederci!' I don't know whether they ever met again.

The whole scene, I confess, had affected me a good deal, in spite of some of the absurdities by which it had been marked; and it was not until I had been alone for some time, and silence had once more fallen upon the Longarone osteria, that I awoke to the fact, that it was *my* carriage which the Marchese Marinelli had calmly appropriated to his own use, and that there was no visible means of my getting back to Venice that day. Great was my anger and great my dismay when the ostler announced this news to me, with a broad grin, in reply to my order to put the horses to without delay.

‘But the Marchese himself—how did he get here?’ I inquired.

‘Oh, he came by the diligence.’

‘And the Count—the young gentleman?’

‘On horseback, signore; but you cannot have his horse. The poor beast is half dead as it is.’

‘Then will you tell me how I am to escape from your infernal town? For nothing shall induce me to pass another night here.’

‘Eh! there is the diligence which goes through at two o’clock in the morning!’

There was no help for it. I sat up for that diligence; and returned by it to Mestre, seated between a Capuchin monk and a peasant-farmer whose whole system appeared to be saturated with garlic. I could scarcely have fared worse in my bed at Longarone.

And so that was my reward for an act of disinterested kindness. It is only experience that can teach a man to appreciate the ingrained thanklessness of the human race. I was obliged to make a clean breast of it to my sister; who of course did not keep the secret long, and for some time afterwards I had to submit to a good deal of mild chaff upon the subject from my friends. But it is an old story now, and two of the actors in it are dead, and of the remaining three I dare say I am the only one who cares to recall it. Even to me it is a somewhat painful reminiscence.

W. E. NORRIS.

Tennis in Britain.

‘ALTHOUGH the life of Alexander III.,’ says Mr. Fraser Tytler, in his ‘Lives of Scottish Worthies,’ ‘cannot be estimated as the boundary between the authentic and the fabulous in Scottish history, yet it may be truly said that with the reign of this able prince the history of the country, when compared with the eras which precede it, assumes a more interesting and attractive form to the general reader.’

For our special purpose in this paper it is a convenient starting-point, as during this king’s reign (1249–1285) we come upon the first authentic notices at home of the famous old game, which, under various names—Paume, Cach, Tennis—has been for so long such a favourite pastime in this country.

To France the world is indebted for tennis; but when the pastime began to spread abroad from the country of its origin into other lands, is very uncertain. In Britain, at any rate, we can find no traces of it before the days of King Alexander.

The mother of the Scottish king was Marie de Couci, daughter of that flower of chivalry, Enguerand of Picardy. It is supposed that the *jeu de paume* was introduced into Scotland by the knights who came over from France in the train of the Queen; but however this may be, whether they brought it over with them, or merely raised an existing game of ‘fives’ up to the scientific level of their own pastime, it is quite clear that tennis was a favourite game of king and courtiers during the too short reign of good king Alexander.

When the unfortunate stumble over the cliffs of Kinghorn threw the peaceful and prosperous Scotland of Alexander into all the turmoils of the disputed succession and its consequences, tennis, like other games in the North, gave place to sterner realities. As Wynton, quoting the oldest specimen of Scottish song extant, says:

Quhen Alysandyr oure kyng was dede,
That Scotland led in luive and lee, [peace]
Away wes sons (abundance) of ale and brede,
Of wyne and wax, of gamyn and glee.

That it was still played in Scotland, however, there can be little doubt, when we remember the intimate connection between that country and France, whither so many of the young Scottish nobles went for their education; but we find no definite mention of the game till we come to the days of the first James of Scotland.

Meanwhile, however, we find traces of it south of the Tweed. Though the allusions of Chaucer in *'Troilus and Creseide'* appear to refer to a game different from tennis: *'But cans thou play a racket to and fro, nettle in, dock out?'*—the expressions may have been those of the tennis that must have been common in England then, for in 1389 we find an Act of Richard II. including this amusement, tennis, among the unlawful games that labourers, artisans, and others were forbidden to engage in.

If we could believe the by no means very credible story told by the old annalists, one of the most interesting historical events in connection with our game happened when Henry V. was meditating his most unjustifiable war against France. The story is familiar enough, of Henry's demand and the Dauphin's answer, indicating that implements of peace better suited the English king than weapons of war. As Wynkin de Worde puts it, as a reply to the English king's message, the Dauphin, *'somewhat in scorne and despyte, sent to him a tonne full of tenes balls.'* On the foundation of this incident as told by Holingshed, Shakespeare has constructed his fine scene of the French ambassadors' audience in *'Henry V.'* When the first ambassador gives the Dauphin's message and insulting gift, the English king speaks thus:—

We are glad the Dauphin is so pleasant with us :
His present and your pains we thank you for.
When we have match'd our rackets to these balls,
We will, in France, by God's grace, play a set
Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard.
Tell him, he hath made a match with such a wrangler
That all the courts of France will be disturbed
With chaces.

While Henry was receiving the French ambassadors and their *'ton of treasure,'* there was another king in England whose love for tennis may be said to have cost him his life. This was the Scottish king, James I., whom Henry had most unwarrantably seized in 1405, during a time of truce, while the boy was on his way to be educated in France. Henry, however, spared no pains in giving the young king an education worthy of his rank. The future author of the *'King's Quhair'* did credit to his tutor, Sir John de Pelham, the Constable of Pevensey, not only in music and the other elegant accomplishments of the time, but his fine tall figure and muscular frame made the captive prince foremost in all knightly exercises and the various games that were then such important parts of a young esquire's education.

After eighteen years' captivity, James returned to Scotland, and for four short years we find him giving his whole mind to the improvement of his country. At Yuletide of 1426-7 the Court

kept the festival at Perth, in the Blackfriars Monastery, and here on a February night, after the royal party had broken up, and as James, wrapped in a dressing-gown, lingered before the fire of the reception room, chatting with the Queen and her ladies, ominous sounds were heard without. The great bolt of the door was found to be away, but a lady—a Douglas—thrust her arm through the staples and held the door till the conspirators snapped this frail defence. Her noble devotion, however, gave James time to tear up a plank of the flooring, and drop into a small vault below the apartment, whence it was thought escape would be easy. ‘As fate would have it,’ says Dr. Hill Burton, ‘there had been an opening to it by which he might have escaped, but this had, a few days earlier, been closed by his own order, because the balls by which he played at tennis were apt to fall into it.’ Then the conspirators leapt into the vault, and as the prosaic Adamson, the seventeenth-century historian of Perth, tells us:—

King James the first, of everlasting name,
Killed by that mischant traitor, Robert Grahame,
Intending of his crown for to have rob’d him,
With twenty-eight wounds in the breast he stab’d him.

When we reach the reigns of the fourth and fifth James, we find from that invaluable mine of historical wealth, the Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer, many evidences of the kings’ fondness for this game, and the considerable sums they lost at it with their courtiers, lay and clerical. After several entries of sums paid for balls and for stakes to the king at Stirling, we find this item, under date June 7, 1496:—‘To Wat of Lesly that he wan at the cach frae the king, 23*l.* 8*s.*’ Next year, on September 23, he is again losing at tennis in Stirling, this time ‘with Peter Crech-toune and Patrick Hammiltoune, three unicorns,’ that is 2*l.* 13*s.*; and, not to multiply extracts, on other occasions he is entered in the Treasurer’s books as having ‘tynt’ 54*l.* to Andrew Forman, the Prothonotary, and 18*l.* to the Laird of Caprintoune: considerable sums in those days, especially as tennis, as we shall see, was always considered in Scotland a cheap game to play at. About the time James IV. was thus devoting himself to our game, Henry VII., as the register of his expenditure shows, was also a tennis player. ‘Item, for the king’s loss at tennis, twelve pence: for the loss of balls, three pence.’ From this last clause Strutt infers ‘that the game was played abroad, for the loss of balls would hardly have happened in a tennis court.’ Might not rather the three pence have gone to replace the balls knocked to pieces during the game, like the similar disbursements in our racket courts of to-day?

The fifth James's love for amusements of all kinds was so excessive that every moment he could get was devoted to sport or pastime of some kind. From the Treasurer's accounts we can see the large sums that were lavished on all sorts of amusements; but perhaps Dunbar's 'Remonstrance' best shows James's reckless prodigality, and most admirably portrays the state of affairs that ruined the king's health and impoverished his exchequer. Here are the lines in which the poet alludes to the excessive devotion to tennis shown by the people, following the king's example:—

Sa many nackettis, sa many ketche-pillaris, ⁽¹⁾
 Sic ballis, sic nackettis, ⁽²⁾ and sic tuti villaris, ⁽³⁾
 Within this land was nevir hard nor sene.

In the poems of Sir David Lyndesay—the 'Lord Lion King at Arms' of 'Marmion'—we are told that the young prince, whose tutor Lyndesay was—'raiffled at the rakkat,' that is, played tennis; while elsewhere in the Lion's verses we see that not only did king and courtiers frequent the 'cach-pule' (tennis-court), but that the ecclesiastics of the time were devotees of the game, as their successors nowadays, even in Presbyterian Scotland, are of golf and curling. Lyndesay gives us this picture of a friar, who was, it may be supposed, by no means singular in his age:—

Thoch I preich nocht, I can play at the caiche;
 I wat thair is nocht ane amang you all
 Mair ferilie can play at the fute ball.

We might infer from Shakespeare's classing, in 'King Henry VIII.,' tennis with other 'remnants of fool and feather' which the English courtiers got in France, that our game had then newly been imported into England; but though the dramatist makes the conditions of the proclamation run that these courtiers must renounce

The faith they have in tennis and tall stockings,
 Short blister'd breeches, and those types of travel,

Or pack to their old playfellows,

these travelled nobles might easily have learned the game without ever crossing the Channel. A correspondent of 'Notes and Queries' has been able, from the records of the Ironmongers' Company, to trace the existence of tennis in England from the tenth year of Edward IV. down to the twenty-sixth of Henry VIII. The following are a few examples of these entries:—

- Ten.* Edward IV. Resseyued of Robert Tooke for teneis ballis iiii.
 " Richard III. William Bryuth for a grosse of ballys xvii.
 " Henry VIII. Item. Rs. of Maystier Bentley of the tennys play for a year, 11s.

¹ Players at tennis. ² Lads who marked at tennis; Fr. *naquette*.

³ Worthless, frivolous things.

The writer thinks these balls were made of iron. He speaks of a tombstone erected to a lad who had been killed at tennis by one of these strange balls; but if the tomb is that one in Elford Church in Staffordshire, in which the effigy holds a ball against his forehead, while the inscription runs, 'Ubi dolor, ibi digitus,' it is quite consistent with the idea that in their sale of tennis balls the ironmongers may have acted merely as agents for some workers in material more suitable for a racket ball. The usual materials of which balls were then made were closely packed feathers, as in golf balls, or worsted thread. Shakespeare adds to these substances, hair; for he says of Benedick, 'the old ornament of his cheek hath already stuffed tennis balls.'

Henry VIII. was much attached to this game. Strutt quotes from Hall's life of the king that his 'propensity being perceived by certayne craftie persons about him, they brought in Frenchmen and Lombards to make wagers with hym, and so he lost much money; but when he perceyved theyr craft, he eschued the company and let them go.' He did not give up the game, however, for, according to the same biographer, a dozen years afterwards he is playing at tennis, with the Emperor Maximilian for his partner, against the Prince of Orange and the Marquis of Brandenborow; 'the Earl of Devonshire stopped on the Prince's side, and the Lord Edmond on the other side; and they departed even hands on both sides, after eleven games fully played.'

Though we find the bluff king adding to Whitehall 'divers fair tennis-courts'—one on the site now occupied by the Privy Council office—for the enjoyment of his beloved game, yet there was passed in the thirty-third year of his reign the most stringent Act against the keeping 'for gain or living' of any tennis court, or the enjoyment of this and several other 'unlawful games' at any time but Christmas, by artificers, apprentices, mariners, serving-men, and many others—an Act that was only repealed in 1863.

In Scotland tennis never recovered from the shock that all games in the North got at the Reformation. We find traces of it down to the end of the eighteenth century, but its existence was weak when compared to the lusty life it enjoyed in the days of the 'Commons' King' and his predecessors. In Mary's court, too, before the fierce zealots swept it away, it was much played. We can get an idea of the extent to which gambling at cards and dice was carried then from a statement of David Home of Godscroft, in a sketch he has left of his brother, Sir George Home of Wedderburn. While at Court in his youth, George, being stinted of money by a step-mother, had to avoid cards and dice, and restrict himself to tennis, says the historian of the house of Douglas.

Mary's son does not appear to have been a tennis player himself, but in the rules he drew out and addressed to Henry, the Prince of Wales, he recommends it in these words: 'The exercises that I would have you to use, although but moderately, not making a craft of them, are, running, leaping, playing at the caitch, or tennise, archerie, palle-malle, and such-like other fair and pleasant field games.' Prince Henry's fatal illness is said to have been brought on by playing tennis one evening without his coat.

At the Restoration Charles reintroduced the game into England, and probably the next few years were the palmy days of tennis in England. Courts were set up in a great many places; king and courtiers, as we see from Pepys and others, and all in the land that Henry's Act would permit, plied the racket, till the state of matters was very much what we have seen Dunbar satirising in the Scotland of the pleasure-loving James V.

When the Duke of York paid his famous visit to Edinburgh, in 1679-82, the royal party occupied Holyrood House, where they gave balls, masquerades, and private theatricals, much to the enjoyment of the nobility and gentry that attended the court, though the more rigid Presbyterians were horror-struck. (It may be interesting to note here that the Scotch ladies tasted tea at these parties for the first time in Scotland.) The Duke and his attendants played golf and tennis; this last in the old tennis court of Edinburgh, which stood immediately without the Water Gate, beside 'Queen Mary's Bath,' and quite close to the palace. This tennis court also served for a theatre for the company of actors the Duke brought from England; and in this connection we may mention that the old building—which in the past had served for the few theatrical entertainments in Scotland then—had good grounds for the boast that Shakespeare acted in it during Lawrence Fletcher's tour with his company of 'king's servants' in 1603. It is not absolutely certain that the great dramatist was in Scotland then with Fletcher; but Mr. Charles Knight has shown from internal evidence in 'Macbeth,' and from other circumstances, that it is highly probable he was. The tennis court by the Water Gate, after it had become a weavers' workhouse, was burnt to the ground in the year 1777, many years after the game for which it had been built had died out in Scotland. The last celebrated Scotch cach-players are said to have been James Hepburn of Keith and his famous contemporary, John Law of Lauriston, Comptroller-general of the finances of France, and projector of the Mississippi Scheme. A game is still played by school-boys in some parts of Scotland which they call 'cage-ball;' it is a rough kind of 'fives.'

but probably in itself, as in its name, it is a reminiscence in a corrupted form of the old *cach*.

According to Horace Walpole, tennis was fatal to a third British prince. Speaking of the sudden death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, he says, 'An imposthume had broken, which, on his being opened, the physicians were of opinion had not been occasioned by the fall, but from a blow of a tennis ball three years before.'—*Memoirs of the Reign of King Edward II.*

We have no exact description of how tennis was played in the past, but probably it did not differ much from the game of the same name as it is played in England in the present day. Sometimes we see the game must have been something the same as the lawn tennis so fashionable just now; at other times, it is a pastime as simple as 'fives;' then again a complicated game, with its many technical names, all of French origin—*dedans*, *grille*, *chaces*, *tambour*, &c.—almost defying intelligible description without diagrams. Its origin seems clear enough. If the Greeks did not play it, they came very close to it; for there is a very short step between making a ball rebound from the floor of the room that every Greek gymnasium contained for ball play, and making it rebound from the wall. *Aporrhaxis*, or 'stotting ba', as the Scottish peasant school-girl calls this favourite game of hers, we know the Greeks played at, and either they or some other ball-players, very long ago, took the short step, and invented 'fives.' 'With a ball and a wall and a hand of five fingers, you have the game of fives,' says a writer. 'With a racket and two side walls you have it on a larger scale. With a double fives court, and a roof on it for protection against the weather, you have long fives; and then the game of long fives, made a game of refined skill, is tennis.' Probably the name 'tennis' (derived from 'tenez,' the word the French players called out as they hit the ball) was applied to the game when the racket supplanted the bare hand, and the varieties of the game may be thus explained.

ROBERT R. MACGREGOR.

‘Au Revoir.’

A. DRAMATIC VIGNETTE.

BY AUSTIN DOBSON.

SCENE.—*The Fountain in the Garden of the Luxembourg. It is surrounded by Promenaders.*

MONSIEUR JOLICŒUR. A LADY (*unknown*).

M. JOLICŒUR.

’Tis she, no doubt. Brunette,—and tall :
A charming figure, above all !
This promises.—Ahem !

THE LADY.

Monsieur ?

Ah ! it is three. Then Monsieur’s name
Is JOLICŒUR ? . . .

M. JOLICŒUR.

Madame, the same.

THE LADY.

And Monsieur’s goodness has to say ? . . .
Your note ? . . .

M. JOLICŒUR.

Your note.

THE LADY.

Forgive me.—Nay.

(*Reads*)

‘*If Madame [I omit] will be
Beside the Fountain-rail at Three,
Then Madame—possibly—may hear
News of her Spaniel.* JOLICŒUR.’
Monsieur denies his note ?

M. JOLICŒUR.

I do.

Now let me read the one from you.
‘*If Monsieur Jolicœur will be
Beside the Fountain-rail at Three,*

'AU REVOIR.'

*Then Monsieur—possibly—may meet
An old Acquaintance. "Indiscreet."*

THE LADY (*scandalised*).

Ah, what a folly! 'Tis not true.
I never met Monsieur. And you?

M. JOLICŒUR (*with gallantry*).

Have lived in vain till now. But see:
We are observed.

THE LADY (*looking round*).

I comprehend . . .

(*After a pause*).

Monsieur, malicious brains combine
For your discomfiture, and mine.
Let us defeat that ill design.
If Monsieur but . . . (*hesitating*).

M. JOLICŒUR (*bowing*).

Rely on me.

THE LADY (*still hesitating*).

Monsieur, I know, will understand . . .

M. JOLICŒUR.

Madame, I wait but your command.

THE LADY.

You are too good. Then condescend
At once to be a new-found Friend!

M. JOLICŒUR (*entering upon the part forthwith*).

How? I am charmed,—enchanted. Ah!
What ages since we met . . . at *Spa*?

THE LADY (*a little disconcerted*).

At *Ems*, I think. Monsieur, maybe,
Will recollect the Orangery?

M. JOLICŒUR.

At *Ems*, of course. But Madame's face
Might make one well forget a place.

THE LADY.

It seems so. Still, Monsieur recalls
The Kurhaus, and the concert-balls?

M. JOLICŒUR.

Assuredly. Though there again
'Tis Madame's image I retain.

THE LADY.

Monsieur is skilled in . . . repartee.
(How do they take it?—Can you see?)

M. JOLICŒUR.

Nay,—Madame furnishes the wit.
(They don't know what to make of it !)

THE LADY.

And Monsieur's friend who sometimes came ? . .
That clever . . . I forget the name.

M. JOLICŒUR.

The BARON ? . . . It escapes me, too.
'Twas doubtless he that Madame knew

THE LADY (*archly*).

Precisely. But, my carriage waits.
Monsieur will see me to the gates ?

M. JOLICŒUR (*offering his arm*).

I shall be charmed. (Your stratagem
Bids fair, I think, to conquer them.)
(*Aside*).

(Who is she ? I must find that out.)
—And Madame's husband thrives, no doubt ?

THE LADY (*off her guard*).

Monsieur de BEAU—?. . . He died at *Dôle* !

M. JOLICŒUR.

Truly. How sad !

(*Aside*)

(Yet, on the whole,
How fortunate ! *BEAU-pré*?—*BEAU-vau*?
Which can it be ? Ah, there they go !)
—Madame, your enemies retreat
With all the honours of . . . defeat.

'AU REVOIR.'

THE LADY.

Thanks to Monsieur. Monsieur has shown
A skill PRÉVILLE would not disown.¹

M. JOLICEUR.

You flatter me. We need no skill
To act so nearly what we will.
Nay,—what may come to pass, if Fate
And Madame bid me cultivate . . .

THE LADY (*anticipating*).

Alas!—no farther than the gate.
Monsieur, besides, is too polite
To profit by a jest so slight.

M. JOLICEUR.

Distinctly. Still, I did but glance
At possibilities . . . of Chance.

THE LADY.

Which may not serve Monsieur, I fear,
Beyond the little grating here.

M. JOLICEUR (*aside*).

(She's perfect. One may go too far.
Piano, sano.)

(*They reach the gates.*)

Here we are.

Permit me, then . . .

(*Placing her in the carriage.*)

And Madame goes? . . .

Your coachman? . . . Can I? . . .

THE LADY (*smiling*).

Thanks! he knows.

Thanks! Thanks!

M. JOLICEUR (*insidiously*).

And must we not renew
Our . . . 'Ems acquaintanceship?'

THE LADY (*still smiling*).

Adieu!

My thanks instead!

¹ Prévile was the French Foote, circa 1760.

M. JOLICŒUR (*with pathos*).

It is too hard !

(*Laying his hand on the grating*)

To find one's Paradise is barred !!

[THE LADY.

Nay.—‘ Virtue is her own Reward !’

[*Exit.*

M. JOLICŒUR (*solus*).

BEAU-vau ?—BEAU-vallon ?—BEAU-manoir ?—

But that's a trifle !

(*Waving his hand after the carriage.*)

AU REVOIR !

The Journal of Charles Collé.

No epoch, perhaps, in French history has afforded more ample materials to chroniclers of every grade than the period comprised between the middle of the reign of Louis XV. and the outbreak of the Revolution. The Correspondence of Voltaire and Grimm, the Memoirs of Madame d'Épinay and the Letters of Madame du Deffand, have familiarised us with its leading features, political, literary, and social; while the current scandal and *on dits* of the day have been minutely and complaisantly recorded by Bachaumont and Métra. Another writer, less generally known than he deserves to be, but in many respects more peculiarly qualified for the task than any of his contemporaries, has furnished us, in a Journal extending over a space of twenty-four years, from 1748 to 1772, with a mass of curious and authentic information relating to the celebrities of his time, and especially to those connected in a greater or lesser degree with dramatic literature: we allude to Charles Collé. Himself a successful playwright and agreeable versifier, and from his earliest youth an indefatigable frequenter of the theatre, he noted down whatever he considered worthy of remembrance, from the tragedies of Voltaire and Crébillon to the graceful impromptus of Dorat and the caustic epigrams of Piron, seasoning his remarks with criticisms on authors and actors which, though assuredly not erring on the side of over-indulgence, are, except in a few instances where his prejudice has evidently got the better of his judgment, substantially correct. His diary, however, is by no means confined to the stage, nor are the personages referred to exclusively the heroes of the sock and buskin; every class of society in court and city, from the prince to the financier, from the magistrate to the abbé, is successively and graphically described in these lively pages, brimful of anecdote, and satirising with the most genial piquancy the abuses and follies of the day. A few extracts selected at random from the abundant materials before us (the entire work forms three large octavo volumes) will suffice to give an idea of the nature of this most amusing *olla podrida*, and may not inappropriately be prefaced by a short notice of the writer.

Collé was born in Paris, in 1709; his father, an attorney in the employ of the Châtelet, and also treasurer of the Court of Equity, died before his son had attained his fourteenth year. Even at that early age the latter, as he tells us in an auto-

biographical fragment quoted in the last edition of the Journal, was in the habit of occasionally visiting the Comédie Française, where the masterpieces of Molière appear to have chiefly excited his admiration. As he grew older his passion for the theatre increased; but, although, according to his own statement, deeply impressed by the genius of Corneille and Racine, he still cherished an instinctive predilection for the author of 'Le Misanthrope,' whose works, together with those of La Fontaine, remained through life his favourite study. His natural gaiety of disposition, and a peculiar facility for versifying, induced him to cultivate the society of the leading vaudeville and song-writers of the period, especially Gallet and Pannard, with both of whom he became intimate; and scarcely three years after his father's death had already attained a certain notoriety by the composition of several burlesque couplets and parodies, including a mock-heroic tragedy called 'Cocatrix.' Crébillon the younger, whose acquaintance he had made when only seventeen, and to whose critical judgment he submitted these essays, at once pronounced them to be rank nonsense, and strongly urged him to attempt something in a more rational style: 'He it was,' says Collé, 'who made me write my first intelligible song, and gave me the idea that I might possibly not be altogether without talent.' From that date his popularity as a *chansonnier* may be said to have fairly commenced; his reception as a member of the famous Caveau followed as a matter of course, and until the final close of its sittings in 1739, he contributed greatly to enliven them by his inexhaustible vivacity and good-humour.

In 1740, the Duke of Orleans, father of the notorious Égalité and possessor of a private theatre at Bagnolet, engaged Collé to supply him with a series of short interludes and other light pieces suitable for amateurs; some of these were mere farcical sketches, interspersed with couplets, but the success obtained by them and the ability displayed by the actors, especially in 'La Vérité dans le vin,' encouraged their author to attempt a higher flight, the result being the production, in 1763 and 1764, of his two best dramatic works, 'Dupuis et Desronais,' and 'La Partie de Chasse d'Henri Quatre.' This last-named comedy, partly imitated from Dodsley's 'Miller of Mansfield,' and generally considered to be Collé's masterpiece, was eventually performed at the Théâtre Français after the accession of Louis XVI., and supported by the talent of Prévile, Madame Prévile, and Brizard, met with a most brilliant reception; since then it has been frequently revived, and still retains its place in the *répertoire*.

The list of this prolific writer's contributions to the stage, including rearrangements of old comedies by Dufresny, Baron, and

others, consists of nearly fifty pieces, most of which were originally played at Bagnolet. As a recompense for his labours, he was appointed reader to the Duke of Orleans, and a pension was assigned him, which he enjoyed during the remainder of his life. The majority of his earlier productions are inserted in his 'Théâtre de Société,' which likewise comprises the entire collection of his songs and couplets, with the exception of those deemed unfit for publication; a certain number, however, of these subsequently appeared about 1784 in a posthumous volume, under the singular title of 'Chansons qui n'ont pu être imprimées, et que mon censeur n'a point dû me passer.'

Collé married, in 1756, Mlle. Pétronille Nicole Bazire, daughter of a parliamentary advocate, and in every respect a most estimable woman; her death in 1781 was a severe blow to her husband from which he never wholly recovered, but lingered in a state of profound melancholy until November 3, 1783, when he expired, a few months before attaining his seventy-fourth year.

The opening passage of the Journal, dated September 1748, refers exclusively to the third performance of Voltaire's 'Sémiramis' (Mlle. Dumesnil's favourite part), at which Collé, on his return from his friend M. de Meaux's country house at Étioles, was present. 'Duclos tells me,' he says, 'that the success of the piece on the first night was entirely owing to the house being packed, the author having distributed four hundred pit-tickets gratis. My own opinion,' he pithily adds, 'is that the tragedy is a bad one, that is to say, bad for Voltaire, for I couldn't write anything half as good, nor could the Abbé Leblanc either.'

Two months later, he describes as follows his first introduction to the Duke of Orleans, then Duc de Chartres: 'Having been informed by a letter from M. de Montauban, one of the Prince's courtiers, that his Highness had heard favourable accounts of my "Vérité dans le vin," and wished me to read it to him, I repaired to his palace at the appointed hour, and was kindly received by the Duke, who bade me be seated, and listened to the piece with apparent satisfaction. To be quite exact,' he goes on, 'I must add, that in my ignorance of etiquette I was on the point of sitting down without being authorised to do so; when M. de Montauban hastily inquired if his Highness would allow me to sit before I commenced reading. The Duke nodded assent, but I am by no means sure that I waited for the permission.'

A page or two further, he quotes an epitaph on Madame Poisson, Madame de Pompadour's mother: 'All the world knows that she was for fifteen years the mistress of M. de Tournehem, the fermier-général, and it is commonly supposed that her daughter owes her

present position to the maternal counsel. It is necessary to bear this in mind, in order to understand the allusion :—

Ci-gît qui sortant d'un fumier,
Voulant faire fortune entière,
Vendit son honneur au fermier,
Et sa fille au propriétaire.

Whoever the writer of these lines may be,' drily remarks Collé, ' he has not yet applied for a pension !'

On December 10 of the same year, the young Pretender, Charles Edward, was arrested, by order of Louis XV., as he was on the point of entering the opera-house. 'Everyone is acquainted with this adventure,' says Collé, 'but what is less generally known is the following letter, addressed by Madame de Tallemont to M. de Maurepas, demanding the liberation of one of her servants, who by some mistake had been incarcerated with the prince's attendants in the Bastille: "The King, monsieur, has consolidated his glory by causing the arrest of Prince Edward, and I doubt not that His Majesty will order a *Te Deum* to be sung in celebration of a victory which does him such infinite honour. But as my lacquey' (giving his name), 'who has been thrown into prison on this memorable occasion, cannot possibly add anything to His Majesty's laurels, I request you to send him back to me.'"

Speaking of Crébillon's 'Catilina,' recently produced at the Théâtre Français, he says: 'The piece has had more success than I expected, but far less than it really deserves; it is true that it has been cruelly maltreated by the actors. When it was given at Versailles, Marshal Saxe remarked to the author after the performance: "I congratulate you on your triumph, monsieur, no one but a great captain could possibly gain a battle with such soldiers as yours!"'

In July 1749, he thus records his impressions of Madame du Bocage's tragedy, 'Les Amazones.' 'The plot of the four first acts is borrowed piecemeal from "Bajazet," "Ariane," and "Sémiramis;" as for the details and the versification, they are imitated from nobody, for nobody would own them. The fifth act is wretched, and more events are crowded in the space of two hours than the most successful conqueror could possibly accomplish in six months. Such, however, is the exquisite taste of the age, that the piece has been played eleven times, and has even brought money into the treasury. "It is an excellent tragedy," observed Mlle. Gaussin; "it makes us all laugh, and enriches us into the bargain!"

In September of the same year, Mlle. Guéant, niece of the celebrated Madame Quinault-Dufresne, made her first appearance at the Comédie Française. 'She is a little girl,' says the journalist,

'between fifteen and sixteen, with the prettiest face in the world, and not unlike her aunt; but has neither voice, intelligence, nor talent. The pit applauded her a thousand times more than she deserved, but I cannot imagine the possibility of her being engaged.' In a note, written two years later, he adds, 'nor was she.'

'On Saturday, February 7' (1750), says Collé, 'Voltaire's "Oreste" was played for the ninth and last time. It would require a volume to record all the extraordinary manœuvres he has practised in the hope of ensuring the success of this rhapsody; they have however, totally failed. He was present at every performance, encouraging his partisans, and placing in different parts of the house the individuals paid to applaud him; at one moment he declared that it was the tragedy of Sophocles, not his own, that the public unjustly refused to appreciate, at another he exclaimed, "Ah, the barbarians, they cannot understand the beauty of this passage!" and then, turning towards his salaried supporters, cried out, "Applaud, my friends, my dear Athenians!" and to set the example, clapped with all his might!'

The renowned physician Sénac, then at the height of his reputation, related to our author an anecdote of his illustrious patient Marshal Saxe, during the convalescence of the latter. 'Wherever he went, he insisted on Sénac's accompanying him; and one day, while besieging a certain town, wishing to examine more closely the works that had been constructed, he ordered the carriage in which the physician was sitting to be drawn up within cannon-shot of the enemy, and mounting his horse, bade his companion wait there till he came back. 'But, monseigneur,' objected Sénac, 'I see the gunners yonder pointing their pieces this way, and aiming at the carriage.' 'In that case,' retorted the Marshal, 'I recommend you to pull up the glasses,' and without another word started off on his expedition. No sooner had he done so than his Esculapius quietly opened the carriage door, slipped out, and took shelter in a trench until M. de Saxe returned, and I must say' (adds Collé), 'that in his place I should have done exactly the same.'

At the date of September 14, 1750, we find the following by no means flattering notice of the first appearance at the Théâtre Français of the celebrated Lekain as *Titus* in Voltaire's 'Brutus': 'He is a young man about three or four and twenty years of age, and fairly well proportioned, but his face is hideous, and his air the reverse of noble. His voice is weak, and, when he forces it, becomes positively disagreeable; and, as far as I can judge from my own impressions, he wants energy and soul, without which natural qualities an actor can never hope to rise above mediocrity.' In a

note on the foregoing passage written in 1780, Collé says: 'I may possibly have been mistaken in my estimation of Lekain, but, whether from prejudice or lack of judgment on my part, this harsh and ungainly tragedian never pleased me. His voice always jarred discordantly on my ear, and his horrible ugliness was inexpressibly repugnant to me.'

In May 1751, he says: 'The Marquis de Prie (husband of the notorious Madame de Prie, mistress of the Duke of Bourbon) died a few days ago, and up to his last moments refused to confess or receive absolution. Certain members of his family, scandalised at this impenitence, sent for the parish priest, and instructed him to repair to the sick man's chamber, on pretext of having been ordered to do so by the King. M. de Prie, who suspected this manœuvre, received him with great politeness, and inquired the motive of his visit, to which the priest replied that he came in obedience to the command of his Majesty. "In that case, M. le curé," said the Marquis, "as you are sent hither by the King, you are welcome, and I request you to be seated; if you had come on your own account, or on that of my relatives, I would have had you thrown out of the window!" With these words, he coolly turned his back on the astonished curé, and soon after died without having uttered another syllable.'

'Yesterday' (July 12, 1751), says Collé, 'I dined with Garrick, the English actor: he gave us a specimen of his talent by reciting a scene from a tragedy of Shakespeare, and convinced us that he is fully entitled to the great reputation enjoyed by him. The passage selected was that where Macbeth imagines he sees a dagger in the air, guiding him to the chamber where he is about to murder the King. We were horror-struck: it would be impossible to describe a situation more exactly, or to interpret it with more admirable energy, and yet with perfect sobriety of gesture. His countenance expresses by turns every passion, without the slightest contortion or grimace, and I have no hesitation in affirming from this single exhibition of his powers in tragic pantomime that he is a master of his art. He considers our actors, one and all, more or less mediocre, and on this head we entirely agreed with him.'

Three years and a half later, he introduces us to another celebrity. 'I dined on the 27th (December, 1754,) with Helvétius to meet M. de Fontenelle, who is on the point of commencing his hundredth year. His mental faculties are still unimpaired, but he can hardly hear or see, and talks with difficulty. *He ate more than I did.*'

An anecdote of the Emperor Charles the Sixth is worth preserving. 'During the reign of that monarch, an Italian officer of distinction was despatched to Vienna with news of a battle, in which

the Imperial troops had been completely routed. On his arrival at the frontier, he was informed by the governor of the first fortified town he entered that, although the object of his journey was to announce a defeat, he must on the contrary proclaim a victory wherever he went, and be preceded by twenty or thirty couriers, each blowing a horn. Obligated to conform to this ridiculous custom, the officer continued his route, and on reaching Vienna was instantly admitted to the Imperial presence; upon which he exclaimed in a loud voice "Victory, sire, victory!" adding in a lower tone for the especial benefit of the Emperor, "Sire, your majesty has lost the day!" On receipt of this intelligence, Charles the Sixth made a sign to the envoy to accompany him into the next room, and there demanded the particulars of the disaster. "What became of my cavalry?" he asked. "Cut to pieces, sire," replied the officer. "And the infantry?" "Bolted as fast as their legs could carry them, sire." The Emperor listened with perfect gravity to this catalogue of misfortunes, then, re-entering the hall of audience, addressed the assembled courtiers as follows: "Let a *Te Deum* be sung in honour of the triumph of our arms!"

In July 1758, the *début* of Sophie Arnould is thus mentioned: 'I have never yet seen united in the same person more grace, sensibility, intelligence, and animation: if nature had given her two-thirds of Mlle. Lemaure's voice, she would far surpass that excellent singer. I allude to Mlle. Arnould, who is only nineteen years of age, and in less than four months has become the queen of the theatre. She is so delicate that I doubt her being able to maintain her position at the opera, for the managers appear to be killing her as fast as they can.' (Notwithstanding the above prediction, Sophie remained on the stage until 1778, and died in 1803.)

Four months later, the exile of Cardinal de Bernis is incidentally noticed. 'People attribute his disgrace to his having last year affirmed to the King that the failure of our military operations was entirely owing to the inexperience of the leaders, and more particularly to the incompetency of the Maréchal de Soubise; and it is added that Madame de Pompadour positively declared that she would never forgive his "abominable audacity" in daring to tell his Majesty the truth. His debts amount to about a hundred thousand crowns, and he possesses an income of a hundred and twenty thousand livres, poor man! If he could put away his ambition as easily as he can his wig, with his natural wit and talent he would not be much to be pitied; we should gain an agreeable poet, and the State, according to the general opinion, would lose anything but a great minister.'

Alluding, in June 1760, to his own 'Partie de Chasse,' he says : 'It is an imitation of an English comedy by Mr. Dodsley, a London printer; I have adhered to the principal features of the plot; but, besides altering the details, have transported the scene to France, and chosen for the period of action the reign of our Henri Quatre. I have endeavoured to give a little picture of the domestic qualities of that monarch, describing him, so to speak, *en déshabillé*.'

The eccentric Comte de Lauraguais, Sophie Arnould's inconstant lover, is the subject of a paragraph in August, 1763. 'He writes from the citadel of Metz, where he is a prisoner for one of his innumerable follies, that he is very well pleased with the officer in charge of him, because he is harsh and severe, and treats him extremely ill, which Lauraguais pretends is only doing his duty. They say that when he was arrested, he asked the agent for news of the King, and being told that he was on a shooting excursion, and had missed three stags the day before; "why on earth," said the Count, "did he not secure them with a *lettre de cachet*?"'

In more than one passage of his Journal, Collé deplores the increasing tendency towards Anglomania, and complacently dwells on the 'prodigious superiority' of the French literature of that day to ours. 'Setting aside all national prejudice,' he says, 'there can be no doubt of the fact; I do not deny that there is merit in their books, but they have not a single book good throughout. "*Clarissa*" is admirable in parts but insufferably tedious; and the seven volumes of the work might be advantageously compressed into three. Dr. Swift, the humourist of the English, has neither taste nor tact; some of his pleasantries are excellent, but the effect is constantly marred by a tone of revolting indelicacy. In short, their writers are perfectly indifferent as to the choice of their images and expressions; and if, as they pretend, they copy nature more closely than we do, it is simply because they describe everything as it comes, without troubling themselves whether the subject is likely to attract or disgust the reader.'

In 1765, Garrick again visited Paris, but this time Collé appears far less favourably disposed towards the great actor than on the former occasion. 'On Saturday, the fifth of January, I invited him to dinner, and was in hopes that he would gratify me and my other guests by displaying his talent in tragic pantomime, which we could perfectly appreciate without understanding English, but all my endeavours to persuade him were fruitless; he turned sulky, and I do not remember ever having passed a more disagreeable evening. I had been more than ordinarily civil to him, had paid

him ten visits for the one with which this "stroller" had deigned to honour me, and had gone purposely to his lodgings in order to read to him "*La Vérité dans le vin*," which he wished to hear. Even then, on my taking leave, he had not the common politeness to accompany me to the door; treating me after the same fashion as he probably adopts towards the English authors who implore him to accept their pieces at his theatre. One can only suppose that success and good fortune have completely turned his head, and made him forget that, after all, he is not, nor ever will be, anything more than an actor!

The death of the Dauphin, father of Louis the Sixteenth, in December 1765, and the universal regret felt at the loss of this excellent prince, are circumstantially related in the Journal. 'It is well known that he never touched a sou beyond the five thousand livres a month allowed him, and four thousand of that sum were regularly distributed by his order to those in need of relief. The Duc de Nivernois assured me that when M. Bertin was comptroller-general, the Dauphin sent for him, and requested him to pay certain arrears due to the officers of his household, saying that if funds were wanting he would willingly supply the deficit out of his own private purse. When convinced that his recovery was impossible, he had but one thought, namely, that of being serviceable to those he loved; and having expressed his desire that a favourite page should be promoted to a vacant company, he enjoined the minister, M. de Choiseul, to see that it was done while he was still alive, adding, "When I am dead, my wish and the young man's claims will be soon forgotten."'

The arrival in Paris of the young King of Denmark, Christian the Seventh, in November 1768, under the name of Count de Haga, occasioned not a little sensation; though only twenty years of age, he appears to have charmed everyone with whom he came in contact by his grace and affability. 'I am told,' says Collé, 'that one day, on his openly declaring his admiration of Voltaire, a lady of the Court took the liberty of reminding him that Louis the Fifteenth cordially disliked the poet of Ferney, and that it would therefore be prudent for his Majesty, when in the royal presence, to moderate his enthusiasm. "Pardon me, madame," replied Christian, "I should express myself before the King of France exactly as I have done before you, being one of the dozen individuals in Europe who have the privilege of saying what they think."'

'The abbé de Voisenon, having fallen into disgrace with the Duke of Orleans and the Prince de Conti, on account of his notorious ingratitude towards his benefactor M. de Choiseul and

divers other peccadilloes, consoled himself by saying: "They will not be gayer for losing my society, and I shall be none the sadder."

The last of our extracts, and at the same time the final passage in the work, relates to Marie Antoinette, then Dauphiness of France. 'A poor woman, whose son had killed a man in self-defence, besought the Princess to intercede for his pardon, which Madame la Dauphine graciously promised to do. Upon this one of her attendants officiously remarked that the petitioner had already implored the protection of Madame Dubarry. "What of that?" interrupted her royal mistress, "if I were a mother, I would throw myself at the feet of her negro Zamore, if by so doing I could save my son!"'

CHARLES HERVEY.

Cavan Superstitions.

OPPOSITE my drawing-room window stretches a fairy tangle of tall foxglove spires and feathery meadow sweet. We have rented a wild retreat in the County Cavan, a good-sized house, which its absentee owner lets us have at a cheap rate because it is very much out of order.

I ought to clear away the aforesaid tangle, and restore the garden beds, but the foxglove forest is so very lovely that I have no heart to do so.

My thoughts were of Titania, Oberon, and the fairy train as I looked from my window at the nodding purple spires, for a network of fancies envelopes the entire region.

Superstition is as rampant here as if there were no national schools.

I am surrounded by neighbours who have had wives and children stolen by the fairies; who have been blighted by the evil eye, or who have had interviews with friends returning from the 'undiscovered country' with messages of warning or farewell. The peasants of Cavan are eager to falsify Shakespeare's words, for to them the grave is not 'the bourne from whence no traveller returns.'

My thoughts were broken in upon by the sound of a violin, and I saw a very old man, bent and snowy-haired, who is one of the greatest characters in the country.

A few pence made him very happy, and he said mysteriously, 'Your ladyship shall have my good word wid *them*: it's no a bad thing to have *them* for your friends,' and he nodded right and left, to the foxglove forest, to the wooded slope.

I resolved to make him explain his meaning.

'The gentry—the good people,' he whispered. 'I'm sayin' you sall hae my good word wid *them*.'

'The fairies! Do you really mean the fairies?' I cried, delighted at having my meditations put into words.

'To be sure I mean the fairies—what else would I be meaning? Do you see them two forts fair forenenst you?'

Leaning on his stick, he pointed with skinny hand towards two clumps of trees growing on mounds, on the top of the opposite hill, looking somewhat like horns.

The forts were in a line, about a quarter of a mile apart, and

down below, midway between them, I observed a cabin nestling under the mountain. 'What of the forts?' I inquired.

'Well, my lady, it's going on for four years since Manus Denny that lives in thon house had his wife stolen by the gentry. She was a well-lookin' woman, an' it might be them we willna name had set their hearts on her; but how-an-ever Manus an' her was ridin' home from the fair across the mountain between the two forts; an' it was in the gloamin', when Manus felt the wife grippin' him hard round thè waist.

"What ails ye, Peggy?" says he.

"Oh, Manus," says she, "they're strivin' to pull me off the horse," says she.

"Catch a houl't o' me, woman, an' I'll warrant nobody'll stir yez," says he.

'She was there one minute behint him on the horse, an' the next she was gone; an' he swears he hadn't the colour of whisky on him forbye the wee drop he took at Red Reilly's on the road home.

'He was all through other when he got home, an' the childer axin' where was mammy. He'd ha' been took away himself if it hadn't ha' been that he had a needle sticking in the shoulder o' his coat. The needle saved him.'

'Did Peggy never come back to him?'

'Troth, did she! She came twiste in the night time, an' he seen her happin' the wee childer in their beds, as plain as I see you, an' says he, "Peggy," says he, "are you livin' with the gentry?'

"Ay, Manus, avick," says she, sighin' as if the poor heart of her was a breakin'.

"Could I win you back, Peggy?'

"If you have the courage to catch me an' hould me, Manus," says she, "you'll get winnin' me back; but I know you're the cowardly man;" an' never was a truer word spoke, for though she came as I was sayin', an' give him two chances to keep her, he hadna the courage to lay his hand on her.'

'Did he ever hear any more about her?'

'Well, ma'am he did not: he looked on her as if she was dead an' buried; but a year after she was took off the horse, he married again.'

'Do you think Peggy was pleased at that?'

'Deed no, ma'am, I know she was not, an' she's not content to this day. She comes sighin' round thon big fir-tree at the end o' the house, (you may see it yonder,) an' sayin', "False Manus, cowardly Manus!" but though he hears the voice, never a sight o' her can he see.'

‘How is that?’

‘Why, sure your ladyship, she’s wid them that can make her invisible like themselves. There’s another ould ancient fort in the wood yonder, up in Drumbannon.’

He pointed out the wooded slope which I had explored the day after my arrival in Cavan. Tall firs towered above the sycamores; wych elms and hazels, and fairy forests of foxglove and fern crowded round their gnarled stems.

The fort was a circular mound, one of those so common in Ireland. I asked my loquacious friend if it had not been a Danish fortification.

‘To be sure,’ he replied; ‘an’ the Danes is often there at the present time.’

‘I thought they had left Ireland hundreds of years ago?’

‘So they did, surely! But the Danes dealt in magic, an’ they’re good friends o’ the fairies everywhere. Sure it was because they wrought too much magic that Brian Boru banished them out of Ireland, an’ drove them into the sea. They had to fly, but they left the briars an’ the hens behind them. Sure you can’t go within a perch of a briar but it ’ill catch you; an’ sure the hens ’ill scrape the thatch off your house to try to drown you, an’ they’ll scratch the ashes out o’ your grate to try to burn the house; an’ when they fly up to their roosts at night, they think they’re going to the Danish land.’

‘Are the cocks as bad as the hens?’

‘Every hair! Every hair! Your ladyship knows rightly, that the cock is the first to bring you bad news? He’ll dance on his perch an’ crow at untimely hours, an’ if you go to feel his feet, they’re as cowl’d as the snow—that’s when you are going to hear of a death, or something bad.’

‘How do you know that Drumbannon is a fairy fort?’

‘How do I know? Musha, musha, how would I *not* know! There was a grand gentleman, a friend o’ the priest, went to travel in the Holy Land, an’ before he went he cut a wych elm stick off the tree on Drumbannon. Well, ma’am, I was in Father Patrick’s kitchen when Dr. Sheean came home, an’ tould his adventures.

‘He was in an Arab tent wid the stick in his hand, when an ould, ould man wid white, flowin’ hair, took a look at him, an says he, spakin’ English, “Wad you let me look at thon stick in your hand?”

“Certainly,” says Dr. Sheean, surprised, an’ handed him the stick. The ould man kissed the stick, an’ says he, “Sweet Drumbannon,” says he, an’ gave it back to the Doctor.’

'Who was the old man? Was he one of the Danes who were banished by Brian Boru?'

'How can I tell you, ma'am? He might ha' been one o' them, or he might ha' been one of the fairies, for they can travel fast; but anyway he knowed Drumbannon well, an' it's certain he was often there.'

'Do you think he is sometimes there now?'

'Very likely. You're a good, charitable lady, an' I'll say a good word for *you*.' And Dan Gow went away, murmuring blessings.

On inquiring about him, I learned that he firmly believes himself to be a particular friend and protégé of the gentle race.

He is a famous cow doctor, and the neighbours for miles round have the firmest faith in his supernatural lore.

He was missing for some months a few years ago. His cabin door was found locked, and when the people broke it open, his pig and cat were almost starved to death, showing that he must have been absent for several days.

Had he gone to England or Scotland for the harvest, or had he met with an untimely fate?

These were the questions asked by his neighbours, but no answer was forthcoming.

Great was the excitement when he appeared again, a little more bent and grey than formerly, saying he had been underground with the good people! He had been fêted, had eaten, drunk, and lodged magnificently; and had played the fiddle for the elves to dance to. Ever since then the peasants believe that he holds mysterious intercourse with his fairy friends, and even an occasional failure in his predictions does not seem to shake their faith.

Father Patrick sets his face against dancing, and his young people are not as obedient as he could wish.

One evening as he rode along he came up with a young man and woman belonging to his flock.

'Phil Ryan and Mary Callaghan, where are you going?' he inquired.

'To Teague Mehan's, your reverence, to get our boots mended.'

They bowed and curtsied, and his reverence rode on.

Presently he came up with another couple, and another, and yet another; and to his question where they were going, they all replied that they were bound for Teague Mehan's, to get their boots mended.

His reverence resolved that he also would go to Teague Mehan's, and have his boots mended.

An hour later he stopped at the shoemaker's door, and

found everyone dancing. Great was the consternation of the company.

Father Patrick rushed in, flourishing his whip, and let his blows fall heartily and impartially upon the young men and their partners.

‘Where’s Dan Gow, the biggest rascal of yez all?’ cried his reverence. ‘Let me get at him; you couldn’t dance if it wasn’t for him with his fiddle.’

Teague Mehan helped to thrust the trembling fiddler through the window, and he escaped to the barn, where he crept under the straw, and lay hidden until morning.

His host came to release him. ‘How did you sleep, Dan?’ he asked.

‘Musha, Teague, I’ve bad news for you this morning—Poor Father Patrick!’

‘Why, man, alive, what would ail Father Patrick?’

‘Sure, Teague, I was angry at him for what he done on the company last night, an’ I just spoke against him to *them*; an’ I’m feared he’ll be found dead in his bed this morning. Musha, musha, it’s the hard-hearted man I was to bid the gentry harm him,’ and Dan groaned in sincere penitence.

Teague, much alarmed and fully believing in Dan’s supernatural pretensions, hastened to the priest’s house, to inquire after his health.

Father Patrick gave him ocular and oral demonstration that Dan Gow’s curses had not harmed him, for looking out of his bedroom window, he abused him heartily for giving the dance, called him villain and rascal, and threatened to ‘take the whip to him next.’ While on the theme of Father Patrick, I must tell of a clever trick that was played upon him the other day by one of my new neighbours at ‘foxglove forest.’

Brian Doolan is an ill-looking man, who, without working, seems to have abundance of everything. He has a very bad character, and is known by the name of Brian the ‘Rascal.’ The people have complained over and over again that Brian steals their ducks and fowls, and the priest lately sent him a message to come to his house.

No Rascal appeared. Father Patrick sent another message to say that if he did not come before such a day, he would curse him from the altar, with bell, book, and candle.

The Rascal put off reporting himself to the priest until the very last day; but early on that day he knocked at the door, and said to the servant, ‘Be plazed to tell his reverence that here’s Brian Doolan come to do his bidding.’

'The priest's not up yet, my good man,' returned Nancy ; 'but if you'll be seated a wee minute, I'll tell him.'

Brian looked round the neat kitchen, and spied the priest's boots, beautifully polished, lying ready for him to put on. He listened for Nancy's step on the stairs, but all was silent.

It was the work of a moment to throw off his own tattered brogueens, and put on Father Patrick's boots. 'He says you're to go up to him in the room,' said Nancy, returning.

A volley of abuse greeted Brian from his reverence's pillow. 'You villain ! you rascal ! So you have set all the old women in the country crying, because you steal their fowls ! You thief, you, don't I know your character ? What did you steal last ?'

'Deed, your reverence, I took a pair of boots from a decent man.'

'You rascal ! Did you give them back to him ?'

'I'll give them to *you*, your reverence.'

'And why would you give them to *me*, you good-for-nothing fellow ? I don't want them—give them to the man that owns them.'

'I offered them to the man that owns them, your reverence, an' he said he didn't want them.'

'Well, well, if he doesn't want them, you may keep them ; but be sure you mend your ways, and keep your hands off the neighbours' fowls, or I'll read you out from the altar, you rascal.'

Well pleased, Bryan left the house wearing his new boots.

The same Father Patrick is very autocratic in his dominion, wielding a power that is rather uncommon at this period of the world's history. He is extremely particular about the conduct of the young people belonging to his flock ; and in the streets of the nearest town he met one of his own young men very late the other night, with his arm round the waist of a smartly dressed girl.

'What are you doing at this hour, Dennis ?' said he sternly ; 'and you, my girl, why aren't you at home in your bed ?'

'Tis no business of yours,' replied the girl, pertly. 'I'm not one of your hearers.'

'Aren't you ? Well, you'll be one of my *feelers* then,' returned the priest, dealing her a blow with his stick.

She would have 'had the law of him,' but that she feared her parents' anger if it came out that she, a Protestant, had been accepting the attentions of a Roman Catholic, so she kept the affair very quiet ; but the story crept to my ears somehow, and is too good to be unrecorded.

The instances of superstition I have hitherto given have concerned Roman Catholics ; but to my surprise I find that the Church people and Presbyterians of Cavan are not quite exempt from it.

They do not, certainly, believe in fairies, but have great faith in witchcraft, luck, and death-warnings. None of them like to meet Mary Lafferty, a red-haired woman who lives near us, and who is said to be unlucky; and if they chance to encounter her when on their way to fair and market, they turn back, and defer their business until another day, no matter how important it may be. My cook, a Presbyterian, came home lately from a visit to her father in the lowest spirits. I asked her what was the matter, and she replied that her father had been awakened the night before by a voice at the window close to his bed, which said distinctly, three times, 'James, he's dead, he's dead, he's dead!'

It seems that his tenure of his farm depended upon a life in the lease, and that the voice at the window came to tell him this life had just dropped off.

'We must leave the old home,' said my cook, 'an' it'll go near to break father's heart.'

She was not at all clear who had given the warning, but fully believed in its authenticity; and her fears proved correct, for the next day news came that the man whose name was in the lease was really dead, and the farm must be given up.

Another of my new neighbours has had a death-warning.

The Wilsons and Callaghans live half way between 'foxglove forest' and the town, in a long cabin, consisting of two houses under one roof.

'Livin' in under the roof wid me,' is the way in which the Cavan peasants describe this close neighbourhood.

One night the Callaghans saw a face at their window, and a finger tapped three times upon the glass; they rushed to the door; nothing was visible, but a mournful wail rose upon the air, and retreated over the hills, growing fainter and fainter until it died away. Of course they believed that the Banshee had warned them of a death.

Their neighbours did not hear the wailing, but were aroused by a loud blow upon the roof of the house.

'Which family is that for?' said the husband and wife to each other, hoping the message was not for them.

The question was answered next day when little Annie Gallagher fell into the river while gathering foxgloves, and was drowned.

One of the commonest superstitions in Cavan is, that it is unlucky to comb your hair at night, as, if you do so, having a friend at sea, that friend will most likely be drowned.

The old people refrain from cutting their nails, lest they should have to search for the parings on the day of judgment! Others wrap the parings in paper, and thrust them between the stones of

a wall, for the same reason! When they cut their hair, they hide away the ends, never burning a single hair, for the burning of hair brings ill luck.

I shall conclude this paper with the strange story of a once restless spirit, who is now settled in a very small space in the town of B——.

Mr. McBride was an attorney, and lived in a good house. He died rather suddenly, and his wife and servants soon found out that he could not rest. Ten o'clock had not sounded from the church tower each night when he appeared, and walking through the kitchen where the servants were at work, went up stairs to his wife's room.

He continued to appear at intervals throughout the night, gazing at his widow wistfully, plucking the bed clothes or the pillow, in a vain effort to induce her to speak to him.

Thus a year passed, and no one had addressed the poor restless ghost. Whatever message he had to give, or secret to impart, none would summon courage to ask what he wanted.

At length Mrs. McBride applied to the priest, who at first refused to interfere, but when she persisted, came to the house prepared to do as she wished.

'Shall I call him up till you see him?' he asked.

'No, no, sir! Oh, no, I never wish to see him again.'

'Well, where would you like him to be settled?'

'Between the water and the foam,' she replied.

At these words the poor listening spirit gave a loud, piteous cry.

'You cruel, hard-hearted woman!' said the priest, 'is that what you'd have me do to your husband? I will not settle him there;—I'll settle him at the cows' heads in his own warm byre for five years.'

The widow and children soon after went to America, and the house is now in other hands. I have been shown the cow house, where, in the opinion of the Roman Catholic portion of B——, Mr. McBride's ghost is still in durance.

LETITIA M'CLINTOCK.

To His Own Destruction.

READER, follow us into a small apartment on the fifth story situated in one of the side streets near the Luxembourg. It is fatiguing to mount so many stone stairs; but we reach our destination at last, and, without waiting to be announced, let us enter.

It is a small apartment, consisting of three pieces: a salon, a bedroom, a kitchen and offices. The bedroom is to the left of the salon, the kitchen opposite. It is a compact little apartment, neatly furnished and well cared for. The rooms are not too small for health, and large enough for the comfort of their two occupants. In the salon one or two cabinets show an attempt at elegance. Books abound all over the room; hidden away here under tables; there standing erect on book-shelves; but the most distinctive feature is an *escritoir* covered with papers, books, and writing materials. In the centre stands a large round table, covered with a tapestry cloth. It is here the meals are served when Monsieur and Madame receive company, otherwise they use the kitchen to dine in every day. As they employ no regular servant, Madame finds this much more convenient in every respect. It is a neat little kitchen, with a table in the middle, large enough for their wants when alone. The rest of the apartment is resplendent with shining pots and pans and all culinary requisites.

But to return to the salon and its occupants. Monsieur and Madame are both in there at present. He is seated at his *escritoir*, thinking deeply it seems; he holds his pen poised in one hand, while his head is supported, with its weight of thought, on the other. Madame is sitting by the window, working. They have their backs to each other. It is four o'clock in the afternoon: a September sun is lighting up the room with oblique rays, casting a cheerful glow athwart this silent couple, as if charged with a daily entreaty that they would be sociable. But they heed not the message. Morning, noon, and night they spend in the close companionship of husband and wife, and yet heaven and earth are not farther apart! The relationship under these circumstances is terrible, to one of them at least; and Monsieur, there, leaning his head on his hand, is meditating on it silently, acutely.

When he rises from his desk, which he does presently, we see him. He is about thirty-eight years old: tall, dark, handsome, spectacled, and mustachioed. As difficult a man to understand as to live happily with, we should say; so cold and taciturn, always

buried in thought more or less ; and Madame, sitting at the window, makes no sign of complaint. She is accustomed to the silence, and cares not to speak, except to ask him indifferently, as he takes his hat and some books, before going out, 'when he will return?'

'At the usual hour,' is his laconic reply ; and he leaves the room.

Her face wears no aspect of regret after he has gone ; she does not seem to mind his coldness, but continues her work with stolid indifference. She is a large woman, ten years her husband's senior, and might pass for his mother. Although in her youth she was not ill-looking by any means, she has now but few remains of beauty left. She is stout and elderly, and wears the matter-of-fact look suggested by a stone that, to our minds, never seems to have asked a question of any power in nature as to why it is where it is. It is a stone, and there it lies without even desiring to be kicked on a little farther. So it seems with Madame. She is there ; a part of her apartment. She has been married to Monsieur fifteen years. Once she had been young, but that was so long ago ! She has forgotten all about it, and there are no children about her to renew the recollection. She had brought Monsieur a very fair *dot*. He was only a poor student when she married him. Their parents had arranged the marriage, and they had acquiesced. Monsieur is now a professor, and a great student, living wholly in his books ; Madame, in her home and her economies, like the good wife that she is. They visit, and are visited in return. They have walked together, eaten together, dwelt together for years in an indissoluble companionship, and yet—as we have before remarked—heaven and earth were not farther apart.

'*Grand Dieu ! Insupportable !*' now exclaims one of them.

It is Monsieur, who on his way down stairs allows this groan to escape him.

But, ungrateful man that he is, what possible fault can he have to find with Madame his good wife ? Does she not sew for him, cook for him, economise for him ? His home is well cared for, his substance is not wasted. Is she not virtue and respectability itself ?

Yes, she is all this, he must own. And yet, *mon Dieu !* how insupportable is life with her !

Fifteen years had he borne it ; silently, uncomplainingly, a dead life of unsympathetic routine with a woman against whom no one could justly bring a single charge of neglected duty. When he was sick, did she not nurse him night and day ? Did she not give her money to aid in his support ? Did she not when he was only a poor student marry him ? And what return had he made for all

this? Acceptance and resignation hitherto. But now there was an upheaval of feeling at work within him that portended a volcanic crisis. Slow silent natures that never complain can endure intensely up to a certain point; but when the fire of necessity asserts itself in them, it bursts forth into flames that lay all around in ruins.

He runs down the stairs rapidly as if anxious to gain time, and is soon in the gardens of the Luxembourg, gay at this hour with troops of children and pedestrians.

Presently his eye brightens and his pace quickens as he catches sight of a young widow lady holding a little boy by the hand. The child is entreating his mother to stop that he may watch a man who is feeding a multitude of sparrows, which he has drilled to come at his call.

She yields readily, and it is while standing there among a group of lookers on that Monsieur joins her.

She greets him with a smile and a look that tell their own tale, and bring the quick colour to his pale care-worn cheeks. Ah yes, she loves him—he feels it; he knows it; and she is a widow—and free! while he is still in the grip of a bondage worse to him than death.

Poor Marie, standing there with her little boy watching the sparrows, she, too, has had her tragedy. With what filial obedience did she marry the wealthy old man her parents sold her to as soon as she had left school, where she had first known Monsieur who had been her professor. ‘And now she is free. Free to love as nature and her heart dictate. It is pleasant to see Monsieur every day. She has known him for so long! It has been such an old affair between them—when she was a girl and he her professor. He was not indifferent to her then, she thinks, and he loves her now!’ With love’s unfailing instinct, she knows he does—and—ah—how she loves him! And why not? She is free. Selfish egotist! She forgets poor Madame yonder, sitting calmly at her work by the window. What avails her freedom while Madame exists?

‘*Grand Dieu! Insupportable!*’ again groans Monsieur as he approaches her. Not even the joy of seeing her can make him forget his chains, it renders them all the more felt. While the old man her husband was living he had borne the burden in silence, and the pain grew dull unnourished by her presence; life became mechanical at last; but when the old man died his torments awoke, and the whole burden of his pain found constant outlet in that one cry of ‘*Grand Dieu! Insupportable!*’

He remains talking to Marie for a quarter of an hour. It seems hard to recognise in this passionate voluble speaker the cold

and silent man of the apartment. There he was dead; here he is alive with the whole force of his being. It is the absence and the presence of love in either case that has wrought the miracle.

And Marie, how tender and bewitching she looks, as she listens to him! She thinks she is doing no wrong, for she calls him *Mon Ami*, that refuge of so many wrecked hearts, who fly to the harbour of 'friendship' to shelter their love-laden argosies. And to do Marie justice, she is sincere. She has no wish to wrong anyone; her affection never steps across the threshold of impropriety; never for an instant, he is her old friend. She dresses up her love in the garb of friendship and embraces it as *Mon Ami*. She even shows it to her confessor in that dress, and is satisfied because he blesses it also.

And he listens to her sweet *Mon Ami* uttered in a voice so tender and penetrating that it maddens him. 'How little it would take to convert the word into one far dearer,' he thinks.

'Adieu Marie,' and he shakes her hand quickly, passionately, leaving her abruptly as the thought crosses him.

'*Mon Ami*, why do you go so soon?' she asks pleadingly.

'Adieu, adieu!' is all he can reply, for devils are pursuing him—as she repeats the word. For a moment he listens to their tempting suggestions. Let us too mark what they are saying as they riot through his blood and brain.

'Life is insupportable,' they whisper; 'why should it be so when a little—so very little—can alter everything? Marie loves you. Ought you to allow her to suffer? Were it only yourself what would it matter? you are man, and must endure; besides, have you not already proved yourself? Have you not borne calmly and honestly the weight of the dreadful years that are gone, when the old man was her husband, and she was lost to you? But now she is free, and although for a little while she will bear up bravely, still life cannot go on from day to day without bringing to her some agony born of sad separation; why let her suffer this when a little—so very little—can save her?'

'Heaven have mercy on me!' cries the distracted man, aghast at the suggestion which he strives to repel; but thoughts once born into life battle stoutly for existence, and grapple fiercely with heart and brain until they gain recognition, if not acceptance.

'So little—so very little,' they whisper, 'and skilfully managed; then Marie would be yours, and if you do risk anything, you will feel, at least, that you have earned and proved your love by sacrificing your soul to save her from a life of pain or dishonour.'

'*Diable! spare me!*' cries the man again, striving in vain to

shake off the horror left on his mind by these seductive reasoners. But they are not to be dismissed.

‘And your life now, what is it? not a marriage, surely, such as God loves. No, it is a hollow harsh lie, an unnatural bondage. Think of the long slow years that have passed; can you live through as many to come? No—thrice no. What then, will you end your life, and leave Marie? Impossible? Then how escape—ah how? A very little would do it. Here—do you see that shop; it is full of drugs—yes, call them drugs, you—a professor, skilled in all kinds of science—what is easier for you than to use your knowledge, and defy detection? It is only the clumsy bungler who is discovered, but you—you are capable of controlling events to serve your own purpose. Risks—yes—in everything there is risk; you risk your life every time you walk a street, you may be run over, you may—bah! a thousand things may happen, and is not your freedom and Marie’s happiness worth a hundred such risks? Chut! Qualmish, are you, about taking a life? Why you are doing a fellow-creature a service to send him or her to heaven speedily! ha, ha, ha!’

‘*Mon Dieu!* save my reason!’ moans the miserable man, awakened from his hideous reverie by the sound of his own low chuckling laugh; and recoiling in horror from the spectacle of meditated murder, that the demon of his imagination holds before his brain with a mocking irony.

Ah! he has passed the shop where the drugs are sold. Yes—he is safe. He has not gone in, he thinks, looking back to make sure of himself. Yes—he has passed it, but the temptation is not over, for here are more shops. Every day he must pass them. Will he in the end resist or yield? For every day these thoughts will come, and at last the devils will over-master him and have him in possession. Impossible! And yet—Marie! So little. What shall he do?—Ah, what shall he do?

And he stands for a moment appalled by the consciousness that demons are fighting within him, hungering for the possession of his heart, his brain, his will. He watches the combat. He sees the fate that is his due if he listens to them. He feels the executioner taking his life. It is a short agony—He is gone—Where?

‘Fool—thou art in the streets of Paris,’ laugh the demons or his own heart. He cannot discern which. ‘What is the use of your brain, your intellect, if Destiny is to make a sport of you and toss you on the horns of circumstance? It is only blunderers who wait upon Fate. If you are not able to defy it and thrust aside the weight that threatens not only to suffocate you, but the woman who loves you, then, man or slave that you are, you are not fit to

live, and death is your fittest destiny. Bah! one would think you were called upon to shed blood! Blood! who wants to shed blood? Macbeth was worse than a criminal in this, for he was a blunderer. Had you been there it is not with knives you would have put poor old king Duncan out of his life into a better; a better, mark—why that alone is a service. Knives—who but a fool would use them unless to proclaim the folly of their owners? The Borgias and Medicis knew better than this; when living impediments stood in their way no bloody victim ghastly and hideous was suffered to bear witness against them publicly. But the impediment ceased to exist nevertheless—died, of course from natural causes, in a decent manner, and was piously buried with funeral honours. Natural causes! Science and skill can compass them surely, if even in an unnatural manner; but then so little does it—so very little—and judiciously administered, why, the verdict on all sides would be, ‘Natural causes.’

The words charm him. He keeps repeating them over and over in his brain as though they possessed a sponge-like property that could absorb the evil from his intentions, and convert a meditated crime into a freak of nature. They soothe and fascinate him.

Natural causes! He fondles the words again and again. He will not part from them. They enclose so many darling possibilities that they become at length the angels of his freedom and the messengers of his love to Marie. What joy they will carry her! What a long life of happiness lies bound up in them! The mocking demons have gone, so it seems to him. But the sly traitors are still in ambush, laughing at their victim because he cannot recognise them in their changed dress as angels of light.

He is almost in good spirits when he returns to Madame, his wife, in the evening. She has prepared a savoury dinner for him of which he partakes, and to-night he seasons their usually silent meal with conversation. Madame listens, but pays no attention to the change from a sentimental point of view. Silent or talkative, he is the same to her—her husband—whom she has married to cook and mend and economise for. She does her duty: he does his. He earns money for the house, which she lays out judiciously. Nothing more is required, and Madame is at all times personally indifferent to the trivial signs of change of manner. Glad or sorry are terms that can soon lose their meaning for many. When Monsieur talks, she listens: when he is silent, she is not disturbed. In fact, Madame is an excellent wife. What more could be desired?

This evening, as on every other, as soon as Monsieur has

finished his dinner, he goes into the salon, while Madame remains to clear the table, and leave the kitchen ready for the concierge's wife who comes each day to clean and scour.

A week passes away.

Madame still goes on with her round, with her routine of duty. Each afternoon finds her in her accustomed seat by the window, when not tempted out by the exigencies of society. On one evening in every week she receives. She sits now thinking over yesterday's reception, when Monsieur had entertained some fellow-professors, and they had talked learnedly together, while Madame was listening to their wives. It interests, her to remember what this one said, what that one wore. But in the midst of this indulgence she recollects Monsieur's dinner, and she goes into the kitchen to prepare for her husband's return. Presently she hears his footstep on the stairs and hurries with her preparation.

He comes up slowly, calmly, like one tired. On reaching the top he goes into the kitchen. His wife is in the act of pouring out the soup into two separate basins standing ready on the table to receive it. So far as she can be surprised she now is so, to see Monsieur come into dinner before she has summoned him. Such is not his habit. He is looking pale.

'What is it?' she asks.

'I have torn my coat,' he answers gravely. 'I must, I find, go out immediately after dinner. Will you do me the kindness to mend it for me?' (Monsieur is always courteous to Madame.) 'Here, I will pour out the soup for you. Allow me.'

He takes the saucepan from her hand, and gives her his coat, which he has thrown off while speaking.

'As you will,' replies Madame, receiving the coat. 'Is it a long affair? If so cover up the soup after you have poured it in the basins. You will find the covers in yonder shelf.'

'Yes, it will take some few minutes to repair, but never mind, I will wait, and keep your soup warm.'

Madame then leaves the kitchen. The coat is over her arm, and she carries it into the salon where stands her basket of cottons and needles. It is an ugly tear and takes her quite ten minutes to mend.

Meanwhile Monsieur is not idle. He pours the soup into the basins and puts them into their respective places. Then he goes to the shelf Madame has indicated, and finds the covers which he at once makes use of. It is evident he is not accustomed to the minor details of the table, for he forgets to pass a cloth over the covers, which are dusty from lying several days in a dark cupboard.

But what of this, it is only a trifle after all. It would have been better had the covers been dusted, but Monsieur has overlooked them, and hurried them on the basins as he takes them from the shelf. Then all is ready and he waits.

Let us look at him while he is waiting.

He stands by the window, gazing out on the sky vacantly. His eye is glassy almost, and every now and then he casts a furtive glance towards the table. Yes, there they stand—the two basins—one for Madame, one for himself. He does not shudder—No—he is calm and white and wan; standing there by the window he looks as motionless as an upright corpse. The sound of Madame's needle cannot be heard, for it is running in and out of the soft cloth noiselessly. Still, now and again he gives a convulsive start. Is she coming? Is that she? and the cold beads of sweat start to his forehead as he turns. No—she is still sewing. Will Eternity ever be so long as those awful waiting moments? The stillness is alive, or he is dead—which?

'Here is your coat. It was an ugly tear,' said Madame, coming in at last, 'but I have done it well. No one will know.'

'Thanks, a thousand times.' And he advances towards her, takes it from her hand, and puts it on. Then mechanically, he takes his place at table. Madame is already seated. She begins to uncover her soup, when Monsieur, as pale as death, rises, saying:

'Excuse me! I will return presently; I have forgotten something, an important memorandum I have to make. Continue your soup without me, I will return immediately.'

Madame makes no objection. Monsieur is always courteous. She is accustomed to this, and she begs him to go.

All this time she has not touched her soup, she has been attending to him while he was speaking. As soon as he is gone, she looks down, and the light falls upon the cover which is supported against the side of the basin.

'*Tiens!* how careless! How disgusting!' she exclaims. Excellent housewife as she is, she revolts at dirt. But now she shudders. '*Mon Dieu!* a spider! of all things I loathe a spider,' thinks Madame. There is a reason too for this, they affect her physically and make her sick. She cannot eat her soup, for the spider has crawled on the edge of her basin. How tiresome! and she is hungry. *Vite!* her husband has no such fancies—she will change basins with him. The spider has crawled away. Not for worlds could she kill it. It has gone, and she has changed basins with her husband, and now she can enjoy her soup.

She eats slowly, silently, dipping her bread into the liquid now and again, and then she finishes it. Still her husband has

not returned. But she never questions Monsieur's movements ; when he has written his memorandum he will return, meanwhile his soup is covered up, and keeping warm for him ; Madame moreover, has taken the precaution to wipe the cover, he will not be disgusted by the unsightly dust or spiders—Ouf !

This is Madame's thought as she wipes her mouth with her *serviette*. She can wait now, having satisfied her hunger, until Monsieur's return, before serving up the second course. She leans back in her chair stolid and comfortable, and then Monsieur walks in.

He is very calm. He does not look at his wife, but takes his seat at table, and removing the cover begins to eat.

'It is good—the soup,' says Madame, throwing out a remark—'and very reviving : I was hungry.'

He does not answer, but drinks spoonful after spoonful, not slowly and leisurely as Madame had done, but hurriedly, as though the time spent in writing his memorandum had to be made good by fast eating. It does not take him long to finish his soup. A very few minutes sees it all consumed, and his basin is as empty as Madame's.

When all is gone, he rises again from the table.

'What ! won't you wait for the bouilli ?' says Madame, who rises also to take the meat from the pot, and dish it up.

'No, thank you,' he answers ; 'I cannot eat any more. I must go. Finish without me.'

He returns to the salon to fetch his hat, not daring to look behind him as he leaves the kitchen, where Madame is busy with the meat. His hat is on the table, and he goes over to fetch it ; but why is it he cannot put it on his head and go ? He stands there rooted apparently to the ground, fascinated by some influence impossible to withstand, that compels him to watch, and listen, and wait.

What is he waiting for ? A cry, perhaps—or what ?

But all is silent. Madame is eating her meat, slowly enjoying it : the only sound that reaches him through the half-open doors is the occasional click of her knife and fork against the plate, or when the bottle from which she pours her wine jingles against the glass.

How he listens ! All his senses seem preternaturally strained in the endeavour to catch some sound from within. But none comes. 'Why should it ? Fool ! It is too soon ! "Natural causes" don't work thus suddenly !' he thinks, wrenching his feet by an effort away from the spot to which they appear to have been chained. He will go out now, but he must not forget some

cigarettes. And he delays again, while searching for the materials to make one.

Madame has finished her dinner by this time, and having cleared away as usual, she leaves every thing in readiness for the concierge's wife the next morning, and returns to the salon.

It has been growing dusk the last quarter of an hour, and Madame lights the lamp. She thinks Monsieur has gone out, and utters a mild exclamation of surprise to find him still in the salon, where he has been sitting for the last ten minutes, still pursued by a spell that forbids him to leave the room. After finding his smoking materials, he had flung himself into a seat, where Madame finds him.

He starts up on seeing her enter with the lamp, and excuses himself.

'I was so very tired that I sat down for a moment and forgot how time goes.'

'You work your brain too much,' says Madame placidly. 'You have eaten nothing but the soup—you took no wine. You will grow ill if you fail to supply the stomach with sufficient nourishment. Let me fetch you some wine.' Then Madame puts down the lamp on the table and sees him.

'Your face! What pallor! You are ill? Speak—say what is the matter!' she exclaims. Shaken out of her stolidity by his terrible appearance—for he is staring at her with a ghastly stare—and his face is convulsed with horror.

She hurries into the kitchen to bring him wine: holds it to his lips, and unresistingly he swallows it. Then he rises, saying he will go out.

'You are not fit to go out,' remonstrates Madame. 'Rest quietly. I shall have you laid up ill for days, if you work your brain any more to-day. Sit where you are. To-morrow you will be better.'

He obeys her. He feels powerless to assert his will any longer. He is conscious of a gnawing sinking and sickness that prostrates him, and he yields to her command—and watches her!

Her calmness now returns. Monsieur is subject to occasional fits of cerebral excitement when he has been much overworked. She has nursed him through more than one attack. Quiet is what he needs, and nothing more is requisite. She takes a chair and draws it to the table to be near the lamp, for she wants to work. The light falls upon her face, throwing out every feature, every movement, distinctly. Monsieur, in the shadow, sits like one fascinated; he cannot take his eyes off her—and watches her. Thus two hours pass away.

'Time flies so fast when one is occupied,' thinks Madame, as the clock strikes nine. Monsieur has closed his eyes at last, overpowered by the mesmeric pendulum of Madame's needle.

She looks up at him and thinks it is time he were in bed. Putting away her work, she goes to him, and touching him lightly on the arm, says:—

'You will be better in bed. Let me assist you.'

He opens his eyes vacantly, then they grow wild. He struggles to lift himself up to a standing posture, but in the endeavour to do so he falls forward with a groan and lies collapsed with agony.

Madame is in a fright, for this is a phase of Monsieur's malady she has not before witnessed. When she tries to raise him, he is rigid, and she summons the concierge's wife to her assistance.

'*Vite*—run!' she exclaims. 'My husband has fallen in a fit! Fetch a doctor at once!'

The concierge's wife sends her husband, and returns to help Madame. Between them they carry Monsieur into the adjoining bedroom and put him into bed, where he lies writhing and groaning until the doctor comes.

After a thorough examination the doctor looks grave; and turning to Madame, says, 'This is a sad case of poisoning!'

'Poison! Impossible!' exclaims Madame.

'Yes, poison,' repeats the doctor severely. 'What has he eaten?'

'Nothing but a little soup,' says Madame, 'and a little wine. I took both the soup and the wine at the same time, and behold me? I am not poisoned.'

Notwithstanding his mortal pain, Monsieur hears what passes between Madame and the doctor. Turning to the latter, he says:—

'Send the women out. I would speak to you, alone.'

The doctor conveys the message, and the two women retire. As soon as they are alone, Monsieur asks:—

'Is it true, doctor? Is this poison?'

'Yes—poison.'

'And I am dying—past all remedy?'

'Past all remedy,' echoes the doctor. 'Have you any idea who gave it you? Can you tell me anything that will bring the evil-doer to justice? Have you any suspicions? Did you poison yourself? How did it happen?'

'Yes—I know how it happened.—Listen—I bought it—oh—*Mon Dieu*—for my—wife—and I put it into—Madame's basin—

of soup—but—oh—was I mad?—did I mistake?—No—no—and yet—she is well—and I am—Ah! mercy—mercy—not dying—?’

‘Yes—dying,’ says the doctor. ‘Shall I send for a confessor?’

‘No—no—Listen.—I was weary of Madame—Life was insupportable—and—*Mon Dieu*—there was Marie—Ten thousand devils urged me on—I was mad!—Ah—this pain—ease me—ease me!’

The confession is made amid groans of pain and horror, from which let us turn away. Rage, remorse, and anguish strive for some few hours with the unhappy man’s soul, tearing him mentally and bodily to pieces. The doctor remains applying what remedies he can until the combat is ended and the wretched man is a corpse.

When all is over, the doctor, who has not suffered the women to enter the dying man’s room, now goes to them and tells them he is dead, and orders the body not to be touched until his return.

Madame weeps on hearing of her husband’s death. She is solaced, remembering that she has always been a good wife and done her duty. ‘And now he is dead! poisoned! It is terrible—frightful! But the will of God be done! Monsieur must have lost his head to take poison. He studied too much. He was not in his mind, poor man. Fifteen years they had been married—and he was a good husband!’ cries Madame to the concierge’s wife, who sits near condoling with her.

The authorities take possession of the corpse next day. There is an inquest at which the doctor gives evidence of the confession made by the dying man. Madame is present as a witness, and hears this evidence. It is a terrible moment, but she can explain it all. ‘Ah, Messieurs—it was the spider!’ And then she narrates how it all happened, and her life saved by changing basins with her husband, who thus swallowed the poison he had intended for her, but she adds, ‘Poor man! He was off his head—for he was always a good husband, always!’

‘*Tiens!*’ exclaims one of the officials as he leaves the house after the inquest. ‘What a droll affair! Madame had a near escape. *Ma foi*—Saved by a spider!’

The Haunted Hotel :

A MYSTERY OF MODERN VENICE.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

(The right of translation is reserved.)

THE FOURTH PART (*concluded*).—CHAPTER XXVI.

ENTERING his own room on the upper floor, Henry placed the manuscript on his table, open at the first leaf. His nerves were unquestionably shaken ; his hand trembled as he turned the pages, he started at chance noises on the staircase of the hotel.

The scenario, or outline, of the Countess's play began with no formal prefatory phrases. She presented herself and her work with the easy familiarity of an old friend.

‘Allow me, dear Mr. Francis Westwick, to introduce to you the persons in my proposed Play. Behold them, arranged symmetrically in a line.

‘My Lord. The Baron. The Courier. The Doctor. The Countess.

‘I don't trouble myself, you see, to invent fictitious family names. My characters are sufficiently distinguished by their social titles, and by the striking contrast which they present one with another.

‘The First Act opens—

‘No ! Before I open the First Act, I must announce, in justice to myself, that this Play is entirely the work of my own invention. I scorn to borrow from actual events ; and, what is more extraordinary still, I have not stolen one of my ideas from the Modern French drama. As the manager of an English theatre, you will naturally refuse to believe this. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters—except the opening of my first act.

‘We are at Homburg, in the famous Salon d'Or, at the height of the season. The Countess (exquisitely dressed) is seated at the green table. Strangers of all nations are standing behind the players, venturing their money or only looking on. My Lord is among the strangers. He is struck by the Countess's personal appearance, in which beauties and defects are fantastically mingled



'Let this rubbish be of some use.'

The Ducal Hotel:

A SKETCH OF MODERN VENICE.

BY HENRY THOMAS.

(WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR.)

The Ducal Hotel (continued).—CHAPTER XXVI.

Stripped of her gown in the upper bed, Henry placed the manuscript on his belly open at the first leaf. His nerves were slightly excited, and his hand trembled as he turned the pages, he started at a knock given on the staircase of the hotel.

The manager, in answer, of the Countess's play began with his abrupt polished manner, she presented herself and her work with a grace that won the heart of her old friend.

"Allow me, Mrs. Westwick, to introduce to you the greatest and greatest play. Behold them, arranged symmetrically in a line.

"My Lord. The Baron. The Courier. The Doctor. The Countess.

"I don't trouble myself, you see, to invent fictitious family names. My characters are sufficiently distinguished by their social status, and by the striking contrast which they present one with another.

"The First Act opens—

"But before I open the First Act, I must announce, in justice to myself, that this play is entirely the work of my own invention. I open to borrow from actual events; and, what is more extraordinary still, I have not stolen one of my ideas from the Italian French States. As the manager of an English theatre, you will naturally refuse to believe this. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters—except the opening of my first act.

"We are at Hamburg, in the famous Salon d'Or, at the height of the season. The Countess (exquisitely dressed) is seated at the green table. Strangers of all nations are standing behind the players, venturing their money or only looking on. My Lord is among the strangers. He is struck by the Countess's personal appearance, in which beauties and defects are fantastically mingled



'Let this rubbish be of some use.'

in the most attractive manner. He watches the Countess's game, and places his money where he sees her deposit her own little stake. She looks round at him, and says, "Don't trust to my colour; I have been unlucky the whole evening. Place your stake on the other colour, and you may have a chance of winning." My Lord (a true Englishman) blushes, bows, and obeys. The Countess proves to be a prophet. She loses again. My Lord wins twice the sum that he has risked.

'The Countess rises from the table. She has no more money, and she offers my Lord her chair.

'Instead of taking it, he politely places his winnings in her hand, and begs her to accept the loan as a favour to himself. The Countess stakes again, and loses again. My Lord smiles superbly, and presses a second loan on her. From that moment her luck turns. She wins, and wins largely. Her brother, the Baron, trying his fortune in another room, hears of what is going on, and joins my Lord and the Countess.

'Pay attention, if you please, to the Baron. He is delineated as a remarkable and interesting character.

'This noble person has begun life with a single-minded devotion to the science of experimental chemistry, very surprising in a young and handsome man with a brilliant future before him. A profound knowledge of the occult sciences has persuaded the Baron that it is possible to solve the famous problem called the "Philosopher's Stone." His own pecuniary resources have long since been exhausted by his costly experiments. His sister has next supplied him with the small fortune at her disposal: reserving only the family jewels, placed in the charge of her banker and friend at Frankfort. The Countess's fortune also being swallowed up, the Baron has in a fatal moment sought for new supplies at the gaming table. He proves, at starting on his perilous career, to be a favourite of fortune; wins largely, and, alas! profanes his noble enthusiasm for science by yielding his soul to the all-debasing passion of the gamester.

'At the period of the Play, the Baron's good fortune has deserted him. He sees his way to a crowning experiment in the fatal search after the secret of transmuting the baser metals into gold. But how is he to pay the preliminary expenses? Destiny, like a mocking echo, answers, How?'

'Will his sister's winnings (with my Lord's money) prove large enough to help him? Eager for this result, he gives the Countess his advice how to play. From that disastrous moment the infection of his own adverse fortune spreads to his sister. She loses again, and again—loses to the last farthing.

THE HAUNTED HOTEL:

The amiable and wealthy Lord offers a third loan; but the suspicious Countess positively refuses to take it. On leaving the table, she presents her brother to my Lord. The gentlemen fall into pleasant talk. My Lord asks leave to pay his respects to the Countess the next morning, at her hotel. The Baron hospitably invites him to breakfast. My Lord accepts, with a last admiring glance at the Countess which does not escape her brother's observation, and takes his leave for the night.

Alone with his sister, the Baron speaks out plainly. "Our affairs," he says, "are in a desperate condition, and must find a speedy remedy. Wait for me here, while I make inquiries about my loan. You have evidently produced a strong impression on him. If we can turn that impression into money, no matter at what sacrifice, the thing must be done."

The Countess now occupies the stage alone, and indulges in a soliloquy which develops her character.

It is at once a dangerous and attractive character. Immense capacities for good are implanted in her nature, side by side with equally remarkable capacities for evil. It rests with circumstances to develop either the one or the other. Being a person who produces a sensation wherever she goes, this noble lady is naturally made the subject of all sorts of scandalous reports. To one of these reports (which falsely and abominably points to the Baron as her lover instead of her brother) she now refers with just indignation. She has just expressed her desire to leave Homburg, as the place in which the vile calumny first took its rise, when the Baron returns, overhears her last words, and says to her, "Yes, leave Homburg by all means; provided you leave it in the character of my Lord's betrothed wife!"

The Countess is startled and shocked. She protests that she does not reciprocate my Lord's admiration for her. She even goes the length of refusing to see him again. The Baron answers, "I must positively have command of money. Take your choice, between marrying my Lord's income, in the interval of my great discovery—or leave me to sell myself and my wife to the first rich woman of low degree who is ready to buy."

The Countess listens in surprise and dismay. Is it possible that the Baron is in earnest? He is horribly in earnest. "The woman who will buy me," he says, "is in the next room to us at the moment. She is the wealthy widow of a Jewish usurer. She has no other child. I want to reach the solution of the great problem of my life, to be that woman's husband, and to make myself a millionaire out of millions of gold. Take five minutes to consider."

what I have said to you, and tell me on my return which of us is to marry for the money I want, you or I."

'As he turns away, the Countess stops him.

'All the noblest sentiments in her nature are exalted to the highest pitch. "Where is the true woman," she exclaims, "who wants time to consummate the sacrifice of herself, when the man to whom she is devoted demands it? She does not want five minutes—she does not want five seconds—she holds out her hand to him, and she says, Sacrifice me on the altar of your glory! Take as stepping-stones on the way to your triumph, my love, my liberty, and my life!"

'On this grand situation the curtain falls. Judging by my first act, Mr. Westwick, tell me truly, and don't be afraid of turning my head:—Am I not capable of writing a good play?'

Henry paused between the First and Second Acts; reflecting, not on the merits of the Play, but on the strange resemblance which the incidents so far presented to the incidents that had attended the disastrous marriage of the first Lord Montbarry.

Was it possible that the Countess, in the present condition of her mind, supposed herself to be exercising her invention when she was only exercising her memory?

The question involved considerations too serious to be made the subject of a hasty decision. Reserving his opinion, Henry turned the page, and devoted himself to the reading of the next act. The manuscript proceeded as follows:—

'The Second Act opens at Venice. An interval of four months has elapsed since the date of the scene at the gambling table. The action now takes place in the reception-room of one of the Venetian palaces.

'The Baron is discovered, alone, on the stage. He reverts to the events which have happened since the close of the First Act. The Countess has sacrificed herself; the mercenary marriage has taken place—but not without obstacles, caused by difference of opinion on the question of marriage settlements.

'Private inquiries, instituted in England, have informed the Baron that my Lord's income is derived chiefly from what is called entailed property. In case of accidents, he is surely bound to do something for his bride? Let him, for example, insure his life, for a sum proposed by the Baron, and let him so settle the money that his widow shall have it, if he dies first.

'My Lord hesitates. The Baron wastes no time in useless

discussion. "Let us by all means" (he says) "consider the marriage as broken off." My Lord shifts his ground, and pleads for a smaller sum than the sum proposed. The Baron briefly replies, "I never bargain." My lord is in love; the natural result follows—he gives way.

'So far, the Baron has no cause to complain. But my Lord's turn comes, when the marriage has been celebrated, and when the honeymoon is over. The Baron has joined the married pair at a palace which they have hired in Venice. He is still bent on solving the problem of the "Philosopher's Stone." His laboratory is set up in the vaults beneath the palace—so that smells from chemical experiments may not incommode the Countess, in the higher regions of the house. The one obstacle in the way of his grand discovery is, as usual, the want of money. His position at the present time has become truly critical. He owes debts of honour to gentlemen in his own rank of life, which must positively be paid; and he proposes, in his own friendly manner, to borrow the money of my Lord. My Lord positively refuses, in the rudest terms. The Baron applies to his sister to exercise her conjugal influence. She can only answer that her noble husband (being no longer distractedly in love with her) now appears in his true character, as one of the meanest men living. The sacrifice of the marriage has been made, and has already proved useless.

'Such is the state of affairs at the opening of the Second Act.

'The entrance of the Countess suddenly disturbs the Baron's reflections. She is in a state bordering on frenzy. Incoherent expressions of rage burst from her lips: it is some time before she can sufficiently control herself to speak plainly. She has been doubly insulted—first, by a menial person in her employment; secondly, by her husband. Her maid, an Englishwoman, has declared that she will serve the Countess no longer. She will give up her wages, and return at once to England. Being asked her reason for this strange proceeding, she insolently hints that the Countess's service is no service for an honest woman, since the Baron has entered the house. The Countess does, what any lady in her position would do; she indignantly dismisses the wretch from the spot.

'My Lord, hearing his wife's voice raised in anger, leaves the study in which he is accustomed to shut himself up over his book, and asks what this disturbance means. The Countess informs him of the outrageous language and conduct of her maid. My Lord not only declares his entire approval of the woman's conduct, but expresses his own abominable doubts of his wife's fidelity in language of such horrible brutality that no lady could

pollute her lips by repeating it. "If I had been a man," the Countess says, "and if I had had a weapon in my hand, I would have struck him dead at my feet!"

"The Baron, listening silently so far, now speaks. "Permit me to finish the sentence for you," he says. "You would have struck your husband dead at your feet; and by that rash act, you would have deprived yourself of the insurance money settled on the widow—the very money which is wanted to relieve your brother from the unendurable pecuniary position which he now occupies!"

"The Countess gravely reminds the Baron that this is no joking matter. After what my Lord has said to her, she has little doubt that he will communicate his infamous suspicions to his lawyers in England. If nothing is done to prevent it, she may be divorced and disgraced, and thrown on the world, with no resource but the sale of her jewels to keep her from starving.

"At this moment, the Courier who has been engaged to travel with my Lord from England crosses the stage with a letter to take to the post. The Countess stops him, and asks to look at the address on the letter. She takes it from him for a moment, and shows it to her brother. The handwriting is my Lord's; and the letter is directed to his lawyers in London.

"The Courier proceeds to the post-office. The Baron and the Countess look at each other in silence. No words are needed. They thoroughly understand the position in which they are placed; they clearly see the terrible remedy for it. What is the plain alternative before them? Disgrace and ruin—or, my Lord's death and the insurance money!

"The Baron walks backwards and forwards in great agitation, talking to himself. The Countess hears fragments of what he is saying. He speaks of my Lord's constitution, probably weakened in India—of a cold which my Lord has caught two or three days since—of the remarkable manner in which such slight things as colds sometimes end in serious illness and death.

"He observes that the Countess is listening to him, and asks if she has anything to propose. She is a woman who, with many defects, has the great merit of speaking out. "Is there no such thing as a serious illness," she asks, "corked up in one of those bottles of yours in the vaults down-stairs?"

"The Baron answers by gravely shaking his head. What is he afraid of?—a possible examination of the body after death? No: he can set any post-mortem examination at defiance. It is the process of administering the poison that he dreads. A man so distinguished as my Lord cannot be taken seriously ill without

medical attendance. Where there is a Doctor, there is always danger of discovery. Then, again, there is the Courier, faithful to my Lord as long as my Lord pays him. Even if the Doctor sees nothing suspicious, the Courier may discover something. The poison, to do its work with the necessary secrecy, must be repeatedly administered in graduated doses. One trifling miscalculation or mistake may rouse suspicion. The insurance offices may hear of it, and may refuse to pay the money. As things are, the Baron will not risk it, and will not allow his sister to risk it in his place.

‘My Lord himself is the next character who appears. He has repeatedly rung for the Courier, and the bell has not been answered. “What does this insolence mean?”

‘The Countess (speaking with quiet dignity—for why should her infamous husband have the satisfaction of knowing how deeply he has wounded her?) reminds my Lord that the Courier has gone to the post. My Lord asks suspiciously if she has looked at the letter. The Countess informs him coldly that she has no curiosity about his letters. Referring to the cold from which he is suffering, she inquires if he thinks of consulting a medical man. My Lord answers roughly that he is quite old enough to be capable of doctoring himself.

‘As he makes this reply, the Courier appears, returning from the post. My Lord gives him orders to go out again and buy some lemons. He proposes to try hot lemonade as a means of inducing perspiration in bed. In that way he has formerly cured colds, and in that way he will cure the cold from which he is suffering now.

‘The Courier obeys in silence. Judging by appearances, he goes very reluctantly on this second errand.

‘My Lord turns to the Baron (who has thus far taken no part in the conversation) and asks him, in a sneering tone, how much longer he proposes to prolong his stay in Venice. The Baron answers quietly, “Let us speak plainly to one another, my Lord. If you wish me to leave your house, you have only to say the word, and I go.” My Lord turns to his wife, and asks if she can support the calamity of her brother’s absence—laying a grossly insulting emphasis on the word “brother.” The Countess preserves her impenetrable composure; nothing in her betrays the deadly hatred with which she regards the titled ruffian who has insulted her. “You are master in this house, my Lord,” is all she says. “Do as you please.”

‘My Lord looks at his wife; looks at the Baron—and suddenly alters his tone. Does he perceive in the composure of the Countess

and her brother something lurking under the surface that threatens him? This is at least certain, he makes a clumsy apology for the language that he has used. (Abject wretch!)

'My Lord's excuses are interrupted by the return of the Courier with the lemons and hot water.

'The Countess observes for the first time that the man looks ill. His hands tremble as he places the tray on the table. My Lord orders his Courier to follow him, and make the lemonade in the bedroom. The Countess remarks that the Courier seems hardly capable of obeying his orders. Hearing this, the man admits that he is ill. He, too, is suffering from a cold; he has been kept waiting in a draught at the shop where he bought the lemons; he feels alternately hot and cold, and he begs permission to lie down for a little while on his bed.

'Feeling her humanity appealed to, the Countess volunteers to make the lemonade herself. My Lord takes the Courier by the arm, leads him aside, and whispers these words to him: "Watch her, and see that she puts nothing into the lemonade; then bring it to me with your own hands; and, then, go to bed, if you like."

'Without a word more to his wife, or to the Baron, my Lord leaves the room.

'The Countess makes the lemonade, and the Courier takes it to his master.

'Returning, on the way to his own room, he is so weak, and feels, he says, so giddy, that he is obliged to support himself by the backs of the chairs as he passes them. The Baron, always considerate to persons of low degree, offers his arm. "I am afraid, my poor fellow," he says, "that you are really ill." The Courier makes this extraordinary answer: "It's all over with me, Sir: I have caught my death."

'The Countess is naturally startled. "You are not an old man," she says, trying to rouse the Courier's spirits. "At your age, catching cold doesn't surely mean catching your death?" The Courier fixes his eyes despairingly on the Countess.

"My lungs are weak, my Lady," he says; "I have already had two attacks of bronchitis. The second time, a great physician joined my own doctor in attendance on me. He considered my recovery almost in the light of a miracle. Take care of yourself," he said. "If you have a third attack of bronchitis, as certainly as two and two make four, you will be a dead man. I feel the same inward shivering, my Lady, that I felt on those two former occasions—and I tell you again, I have caught my death in Venice."

'Speaking some comforting words, the Baron leads him to his room. The Countess is left alone on the stage.

‘She seats herself, and looks towards the door by which the Courier has been led out. “Ah! my poor fellow,” she says, “if you could only change constitutions with my Lord, what a happy result would follow for the Baron and for me! If *you* could only get cured of a trumpery cold with a little hot lemonade, and if *he* could only catch his death in your place——!”’

‘She suddenly pauses—considers for a while—and springs to her feet, with a cry of triumphant surprise: the wonderful, the unparalleled idea has crossed her mind like a flash of lightning. Make the two men change names and places—and the deed is done. Where are the obstacles? Remove my Lord (by fair means or foul) from his room; and keep him secretly prisoner in the palace, to live or die as future necessity may determine. Place the Courier in the vacant bed, and call in the doctor to see him—ill, in my Lord’s character, and (if he dies) dying under my Lord’s name!’

The manuscript dropped from Henry’s hands. A sickening sense of horror overpowered him. The question which had occurred to his mind at the close of the First Act of the Play assumed a new and terrible interest now. As far as the scene of the Countess’s soliloquy, the incidents of the Second Act had reflected the events of his late brother’s life as faithfully as the incidents of the First Act. Was the monstrous plot, revealed in the lines which he had just read, the offspring of the Countess’s morbid imagination? or had she, in this case also, deluded herself with the idea that she was inventing when she was really writing under the influence of her own guilty remembrances of the past? If the latter interpretation were the true one, he had just read the narrative of the contemplated murder of his brother, planned in cold blood by a woman who was at that moment inhabiting the same house with him. While, to make the fatality complete, Agnes herself had innocently provided the conspirators with the one man who was fitted to be the passive agent of their crime.

Even the bare doubt that it might be so was more than he could endure. He left his room; resolved to force the truth out of the Countess, or to denounce her before the authorities as a murderess at large.

Arrived at her door, he was met by a person just leaving the room. The person was the manager. He was hardly recognisable; he looked and spoke like a man in a state of desperation.

‘Oh, go in, if you like!’ he said to Henry. ‘Mark this, sir! I am not a superstitious man; but I do begin to believe that crimes carry their own curse with them. This hotel is under a curse

What happens in the morning? We discover a crime committed in the old days of the palace. The night comes, and brings another dreadful event with it—a death; a sudden and shocking death, in the house. Go in, and see for yourself! I shall resign my situation, Mr. Westwick: I can't contend with the fatalities that pursue me here!’

Henry entered the room.

The Countess was stretched on her bed. The doctor on one side, and the chambermaid on the other, were standing looking at her. From time to time, she drew a heavy stertorous breath, like a person oppressed in sleeping. ‘Is she likely to die?’ Henry asked.

‘She is dead,’ the doctor answered. ‘Dead of the rupture of a blood-vessel on the brain. Those sounds that you hear are purely mechanical—they may go on for hours.’

Henry looked at the chambermaid. She had little to tell. The Countess had refused to go to bed, and had placed herself at her desk to proceed with her writing. Finding it useless to remonstrate with her, the maid had left the room to speak to the manager. In the shortest possible time, the doctor was summoned to the hotel, and found the Countess dead on the floor. There was this to tell—and no more.

Looking at the writing-table as he went out, Henry saw the sheet of paper on which the Countess had traced her last lines of writing. The characters were almost illegible. Henry could just distinguish the words, ‘First Act,’ and ‘Persons of the Drama.’ The lost wretch had been thinking of her Play to the last, and had begun it all over again!

CHAPTER XXVII.

HENRY returned to his room.

His first impulse was to throw aside the manuscript, and never to look at it again. The one chance of relieving his mind from the dreadful uncertainty that oppressed it, by obtaining positive evidence of the truth, was a chance annihilated by the Countess's death. What good purpose could be served, what relief could he anticipate, if he read more?

He walked up and down the room. After an interval, his thoughts took a new direction; the question of the manuscript presented itself under another point of view. Thus far, his reading had only informed him that the conspiracy had been planned. How did he know that the plan had been put in execution?

The manuscript lay just before him on the floor. He hesitated;

he then picked it up; and, returning to the table, read on as follows, from the point at which he had left off.

‘While the Countess is still absorbed in the bold yet simple combination of circumstances which she has discovered, the Baron returns. He takes a serious view of the case of the Courier; it may be necessary, he thinks, to send for medical advice. No servant is left in the palace, now the English maid has taken her departure. The Baron himself must fetch the doctor, if the doctor is really needed.

“Let us have medical help, by all means,” his sister replies. “But wait and hear something that I have to say to you first.” She then electrifies the Baron by communicating her idea to him. What danger of discovery have they to dread? My Lord’s life in Venice has been a life of absolute seclusion: nobody but his banker knows him, even by personal appearance. He has presented his letter of credit as a perfect stranger; and he and his banker have never seen each other since that first visit. He has given no parties, and gone to no parties. On the few occasions when he has hired a gondola or taken a walk, he has always been alone. Thanks to the atrocious suspicion which makes him ashamed of being seen with his wife, he has led the very life which makes the proposed enterprise easy of accomplishment.

‘The cautious Baron listens—but gives no positive opinion, as yet. “See what you can do with the Courier,” he says; “and I will decide when I hear the result. One valuable hint I may give you before you go. Your man is easily tempted by money—if you only offer him enough. The other day, I asked him, in jest, what he would do for a thousand pounds. He answered, ‘Anything.’ Bear that in mind; and offer your highest bid without bargaining.”

‘The scene changes to the Courier’s room, and shows the poor wretch with a photographic portrait of his wife in his hand, crying. The Countess enters.

‘She wisely begins by sympathising with her contemplated accomplice. He is duly grateful; he confides his sorrows to his gracious mistress. Now that he believes himself to be on his death-bed, he feels remorse for his neglectful treatment of his wife. He could resign himself to die; but despair overpowers him when he remembers that he has saved no money, and that he will leave his widow, without resources, to the mercy of the world.

‘On this hint, the Countess speaks. “Suppose you were asked to do a perfectly easy thing,” she says; “and suppose you were rewarded for doing it by a present of a thousand pounds, as a legacy for your widow?”

‘The Courier raises himself on his pillow, and looks at the Countess with an expression of incredulous surprise. She can hardly be cruel enough (he thinks) to joke with a man in his miserable plight. Will she say plainly what this perfectly easy thing is, the doing of which will meet with such a magnificent reward?’

‘The Countess answers that question by confiding her project to the Courier, without the slightest reserve.

‘Some minutes of silence follow when she has done. The Courier is not weak enough yet to speak without stopping to think first. Still keeping his eyes on the Countess, he makes a quaintly insolent remark on what he has just heard. “I have not hitherto been a religious man; but I feel myself on the way to it. Since your ladyship has spoken to me, I believe in the Devil.” It is the Countess’s interest to see the humorous side of this confession of faith. She takes no offence. She only says, “I will give you half an hour by yourself, to think over my proposal. You are in danger of death. Decide, in your wife’s interests, whether you will die worth nothing, or die worth a thousand pounds.”’

‘Left alone, the Courier seriously considers his position—and decides. He rises with difficulty; writes a few lines on a leaf taken from his pocket-book; and, with slow and faltering steps, leaves the room.

‘The Countess, returning at the expiration of the half-hour’s interval, finds the room empty. While she is wondering, the Courier opens the door. What has he been doing out of his bed? He answers, “I have been protecting my own life, my lady, on the bare chance that I may recover from the bronchitis for the third time. If you or the Baron attempts to hurry me out of this world, or to deprive me of my thousand pounds reward, I shall tell the doctor where he will find a few lines of writing, which describe your ladyship’s plot. I may not have strength enough, in the case supposed, to betray you by making a complete confession with my own lips; but I can employ my last breath to speak the half-dozen words which will tell the doctor where he is to look. Those words, it is needless to add, will be addressed to your Ladyship, if I find your engagements towards me faithfully kept.”’

‘With this audacious preface, he proceeds to state the conditions on which he will play his part in the conspiracy, and die (if he does die) worth a thousand pounds.

‘Either the Countess or the Baron are to taste the food and drink brought to his bedside, in his presence, and even the medicines which the doctor may prescribe for him. As for the promised sum of money, it is to be produced in one bank-note,

folded in a sheet of paper, on which a line is to be written, dictated by the Courier. The two enclosures are then to be sealed up in an envelope, addressed to his wife, and stamped ready for the post. This done, the letter is to be placed under his pillow; the Baron or the Countess being at liberty to satisfy themselves, day by day, at their own time, that the letter remains in its place, with the seal unbroken, as long as the doctor has any hope of his patient's recovery. The last stipulation follows. The Courier has a conscience; and with a view to keeping it easy, insists that he shall be left in ignorance of that part of the plot which relates to the sequestration of my Lord. Not that he cares particularly what becomes of his miserly master—but he does dislike taking other people's responsibilities on his own shoulders.

'These conditions being agreed to, the Countess calls in the Baron, who has been waiting events in the next room.

'He is informed that the Courier has yielded to temptation; but he is still too cautious to make any compromising remarks. Keeping his back turned on the bed, he shows a bottle to the Countess. It is labelled "Chloroform." She understands that my Lord is to be removed from his room in a convenient state of insensibility. In what part of the palace is he to be hidden? As they open the door to go out, the Countess whispers that question to the Baron. The Baron whispers back, "In the vaults!" The curtain falls.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

So the Second Act ended.

Turning to the Third Act, Henry looked wearily at the pages as he let them slip through his fingers. Both in mind and body, he began to feel the need of repose.

In one important respect, the later portion of the manuscript differed from the pages which he had just been reading. Signs of an overwrought brain showed themselves, here and there, as the outline of the Play approached its end. The handwriting grew worse and worse. Some of the longer sentences were left unfinished. In the exchange of dialogue, questions and answers were not always attributed respectively to the right speaker. At certain intervals the writer's failing intelligence seemed to recover itself for a while; only to relapse again, and to lose the thread of the narrative more hopelessly than ever.

After reading one or two of the more coherent passages, Henry recoiled from the ever-darkening horror of the story. He closed the manuscript, heartsick and exhausted, and threw himself on his

bed to rest. The door opened almost at the same moment. Lord Montbarry entered the room.

'We have just returned from the Opera,' he said; 'and we have heard the news of that miserable woman's death. They say you spoke to her in her last moments; and I want to hear how it happened.'

'You shall hear how it happened,' Henry answered; 'and more than that. You are now the head of the family, Stephen; and I feel bound, in the position which oppresses me, to leave you to decide what ought to be done.'

With those introductory words, he told his brother how the Countess's Play had come into his hands. 'Read the first few pages,' he said. 'I am anxious to know whether the same impression is produced on both of us.'

Before Lord Montbarry had got half-way through the First Act, he stopped, and looked at his brother. 'What does she mean by boasting of this as her own invention?' he asked. 'Was she too crazy to remember that these things really happened?'

This was enough for Henry: the same impression had been produced on both of them. 'You will do as you please,' he said. 'But if you will be guided by me, spare yourself the reading of those pages to come, which describe our brother's terrible expiation of his heartless marriage.'

'Have *you* read it all, Henry?'

'Not all. I shrank from reading some of the latter part of it. Neither you nor I saw much of our elder brother after we left school; and, for my part, I felt, and never scrupled to express my feeling, that he behaved infamously to Agnes. But when I read that unconscious confession of the murderous conspiracy to which he fell a victim, I remembered, with something like remorse, that the same mother bore us. I have felt for him to-night, what I am ashamed to think I never felt for him before.'

Lord Montbarry took his brother's hand.

'You are a good fellow, Henry,' he said; 'but are you quite sure that you have not been needlessly distressing yourself? Because some of this crazy creature's writing accidentally tells what we know to be the truth, does it follow that all the rest is to be relied on to the end?'

'There is no possible doubt of it,' Henry replied.

'No possible doubt?' his brother repeated. 'I shall go on with my reading, Henry—and see what justification there may be for that confident conclusion of yours.'

He read on steadily, until he had reached the end of the Second Act. Then he looked up.

'Do you really believe that the mutilated remains which you

discovered this morning are the remains of our brother?' he asked. 'And do you believe it on such evidence as this?'

Henry answered silently by a sign in the affirmative.

Lord Montbarry checked himself—evidently on the point of entering an indignant protest.

'You acknowledge that you have not read the later scenes of the piece,' he said. 'Don't be childish, Henry! If you persist in pinning your faith on such stuff as this, the least you can do is to make yourself thoroughly acquainted with it. Will you read the Third Act? No? Then I shall read it to you.'

He turned to the Third Act, and ran over those fragmentary passages which were clearly enough written and expressed to be intelligible to the mind of a stranger.

'Here is a scene in the vaults of the palace,' he began. 'The victim of the conspiracy is sleeping on his miserable bed; and the Baron and the Countess are considering the position in which they stand. The Countess (as well as I can make it out) has raised the money that is wanted by borrowing on the security of her jewels at Frankfort; and the Courier upstairs is still declared by the Doctor to have a chance of recovery. What are the conspirators to do, if the man does recover? The cautious Baron suggests setting the prisoner free. If he ventures to appeal to the law, it is easy to declare that he is subject to insane delusion, and to call his own wife as witness. On the other hand, if the Courier dies, how is the sequestered and unknown nobleman to be put out of the way? Passively, by letting him starve in his prison? No: the Baron is a man of refined tastes; he dislikes needless cruelty. The active policy remains—say, assassination by the knife of a hired bravo? The Baron objects to trusting an accomplice; also to spending money on anyone but himself. Shall they drop their prisoner into the canal? The Baron declines to trust water; water will show him on the surface. Shall they set his bed on fire? An excellent idea; but the smoke might be seen. No: the circumstances being now entirely altered, poisoning him presents the easiest way out of it. He has simply become a superfluous person. The cheapest poison will do.—Is it possible, Henry, that you believe this consultation really took place?'

Henry made no reply. The succession of the questions that had just been read to him, exactly followed the succession of the dreams that had terrified Mrs. Norbury, on the two nights which she had passed in the hotel. It was useless to point out this coincidence to his brother. He only said, 'Go on.'

Lord Montbarry turned the pages until he came to the next intelligible passage.

‘Here,’ he proceeded, ‘is a double scene on the stage—so far as I can understand the sketch of it. The Doctor is upstairs, innocently writing his certificate of my Lord’s decease, by the dead Courier’s bedside. Down in the vaults, the Baron stands by the corpse of the poisoned lord, preparing the strong chemical acids which are to reduce it to a heap of ashes—Surely, it is not worth while to trouble ourselves with deciphering such melodramatic horrors as these? Let us get on! let us get on!’

He turned the leaves again; attempting vainly to discover the meaning of the confused scenes that followed. On the last page but one, he found the last intelligible sentences.

‘The Third Act seems to be divided,’ he said, ‘into two Parts or Tableaux. I think I can read the writing at the beginning of the Second Part. The Baron and the Countess open the scene. The Baron’s hands are mysteriously concealed by gloves. He has reduced the body to ashes by his own system of cremation, with the exception of the head——’

Henry interrupted his brother there. ‘Don’t read any more!’ he exclaimed.

‘Let us do the Countess justice,’ Lord Montbarry persisted. ‘There are not half a dozen lines more that I can make out! The accidental breaking of his jar of acid has burnt the Baron’s hands severely. He is still unable to proceed to the destruction of the head—and the Countess is woman enough (with all her wickedness) to shrink from attempting to take his place—when the first news is received of the coming arrival of the commission of inquiry despatched by the insurance offices. The Baron feels no alarm. Inquire as the commission may, it is the natural death of the Courier (in my Lord’s character) that they are blindly investigating. The head not being destroyed, the obvious alternative is to hide it—and the Baron is equal to the occasion. His studies in the old library have informed him of a safe place of concealment in the palace. The Countess may recoil from handling the acids and watching the process of cremation; but she can surely sprinkle a little disinfecting powder——’

‘No more!’ Henry reiterated. ‘No more!’

‘There is no more that can be read, my dear fellow. The last page looks like sheer delirium. She may well have told you that her invention had failed her!’

‘Face the truth honestly, Stephen, and say her memory.’

Lord Montbarry rose from the table at which he had been sitting, and looked at his brother with pitying eyes.

‘Your nerves are out of order, Henry,’ he said. ‘And no wonder, after that frightful discovery under the hearthstone.’

‘Nothing. We only know that her mind never recovered the terror of it.’

Agnes was not quite satisfied. The subject troubled her. Even her own brief intercourse with her miserable rival of other days suggested questions that perplexed her. She remembered the Countess’s prediction. ‘You have to bring me to the day of discovery, and to the punishment that is my doom.’ Had the prediction simply failed, like other mortal prophecies?—or had it been fulfilled on the terrible night when she had seen the apparition, and when she had innocently tempted the Countess to watch her in her room?

Let it, however, be recorded, among the other virtues of Mrs. Henry Westwick, that she never again attempted to persuade her husband into betraying his secrets. Other men’s wives, hearing of this extraordinary conduct (and being trained in the modern school of morals and manners), naturally regarded her with compassionate contempt. They spoke of Agnes, from that time forth, as ‘rather an old-fashioned person.’

Is that all?

That is all.

Is there no explanation of the mystery of The Haunted Hotel?

Ask yourself if there is any explanation of the mystery of your own life and death.—Farewell.

(The End.)

BELGRAVIA.

DECEMBER 1878.

One by One.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON.

I.

‘NO. He could not have meant to leave Starvation to his own little girl. . . . He might leave it to me, and welcome, since he left Love with it : but to Bertha ? Surely, no. He could not leave Love to a baby whom he had never even seen : who was not even born until he had gone where Love is the only jewel. *He* knows that, now : and that, on earth, Love means bread for Bertha. It must go, for a little while—and, if I am wrong, he will forgive me, for he will *know*. Ah, Louis, if you had loved me enough to live, you would have loved Bertha too, and would have thought every pearl in the sea well exchanged for a crumb for her.’

Of course it was only Bertha’s mother who could think these thoughts in her heart, whatever else they might mean. A woman so beautiful as she was, had she not been some one’s mother, could not have spoken so sacrilegiously of all the treasure of the sea. It is at least as rare in Paris as in any other great city to find a woman at the same time so beautiful and, if this wretched attic was really her only home, so poor ; and it would be strange, if it were not so common to find pearls in such rough lodgings as oyster-shells. She was, moreover, of that style of beauty which finds it easiest to emerge from such lodgings, not as the butterfly flaunts out from the chrysalis shell, but as the snowdrop creeps out from the earth and begs, for the new spring’s sake, to be gathered and worn—and in Paris, even as elsewhere, there are plenty of gatherers. Her delicate and even fragile grace of face and form drew charm, instead of losing it, from a settled sadness of eyes and lips, from her drooping weariness over the bare deal table, and from the over-fairness of complexion which had turned into an almost pearl-like transparency. Connoisseurs in beauty, thoroughgoing enough to be cruel for Art’s sake, would have been tempted to leave her there,

that she might always wear the shabbiest black until she and her gown wore out in company: if, instead of being apparently half-way to ghostland, she could become a phantom altogether, the climax of her beauty would be reached and sealed. Another man of a different temper, would have wished to hold her by both arms for fear of her turning into white mist before his eyes.

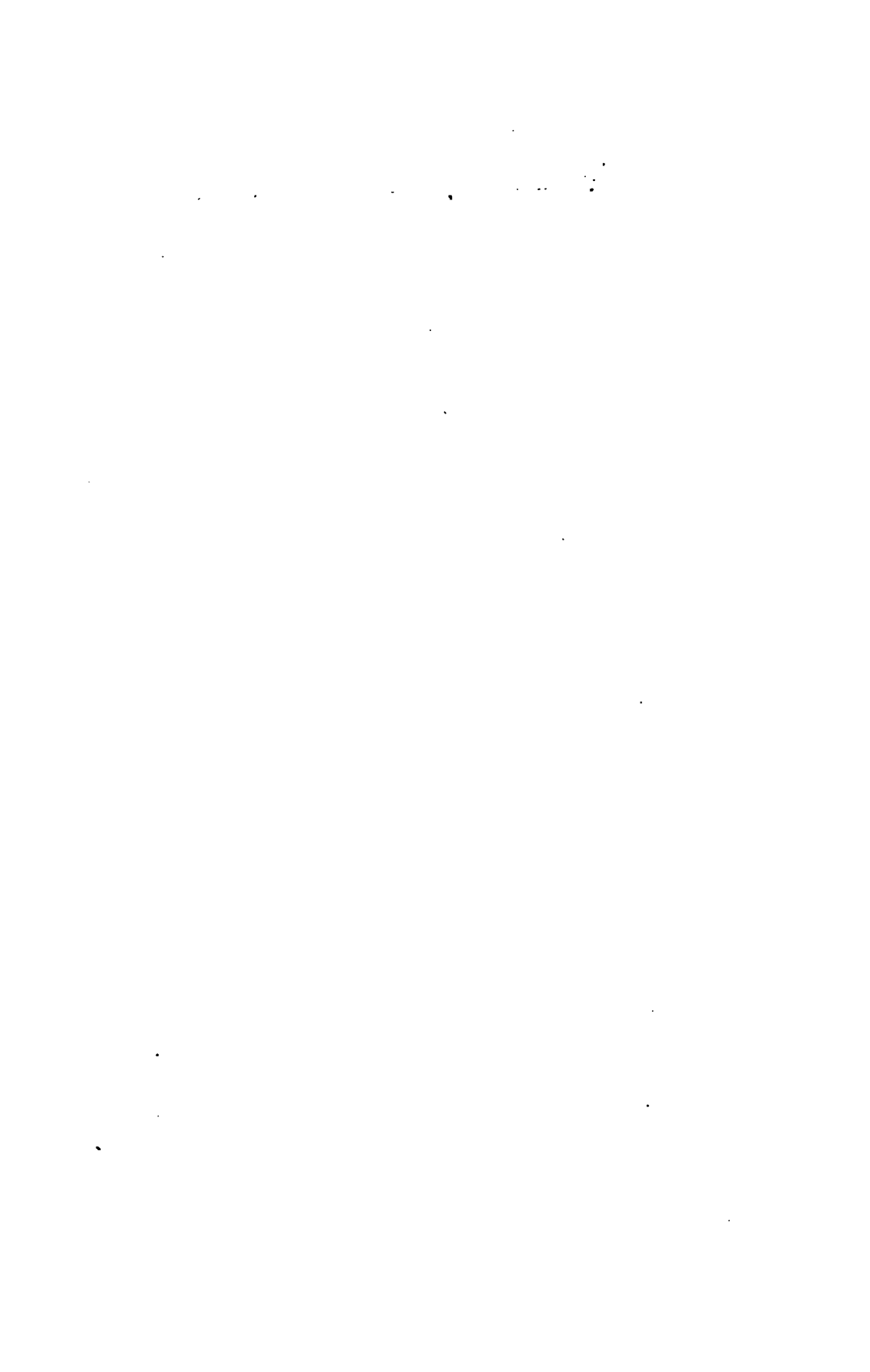
But, judging from the bare deal table, the damp and cracked walls, and all the innumerable signs of emptiness and hunger, it was clear that no stronger arms held her back from such a transformation than Bertha's. And, weak as those were, they were no doubt stronger than any man's in the world.

She must once have been a very young mother, for she could scarcely yet be thirty, while Bertha, now tossing in a sleep that was half of hunger, half of fever, must be at least ten years old. The mother, having thought her thought, left the table and sat down by the child's miserable bedside, and thought, for a long time, without thinking. To oneself, to those whom one loves, and to God, one does not always think in words. Then, scarcely moving her eager eyes from Bertha's face, as if doing what she was unwilling that Innocence should wake to see, she crept quickly, but without noise, to the topmost shelf of an otherwise empty corner cupboard, and, with a sigh buried out of hearing, took down a small parcel wrapped up roughly in an old 'Moniteur.' Then she crept back to Bertha, and bent over her without thinking at all.

One of the most famous jewellers in Paris, about thirty-five years ago, was Monsieur Pascal Fénix, who lived at his place of business in the old Rue Duguesclin: a street which, as all but Parisian memories are aware, was cut out of the map by one of Baron Haussmann's paths for cannonballs. The shop, which stood in about the middle of the south side of the street, was not set out so as to turn the chance passenger into a customer. It was not upon the chances of the day that Monsieur Pascal Fénix relied for fame or fortune: his house was not a spider's web spun at random for midges, but a treasure-house into which only the very rich could think of entering with their eyes wide open, and with their purses as open as their eyes. Perhaps there was even an affectation of slovenliness and ultra-simplicity in the arrangement of the dark and nearly empty window where a tarnished silver goblet and a few brooches and bracelets thrown down at random served for a shop-sign rather than for a sample. Wertheimer et Cie., a few doors farther down, made fifty times the show; and yet the stock of Pascal Fénix would have bought up Wertheimer et Cie. at least fifty times. Wertheimer et Cie. had a hundred customers for



'A small parcel wrapped up roughly.'



every one that entered the dark and narrow door of Pascal Fénix ; but it was the fable of the doe rabbit and the lioness. Whenever Pascal Fénix had a customer, he, or she, was a real lion.

Pascal Fénix had not been the architect of his own fortunes. But that was only an accident. He would most surely have made them if his father had not left them to him ready-made. As things were, he had nothing to do but to double them : and he had trebled them. The task had been comparatively easy for a good man of business, since politics for some years past had been in harmony with trade, art, and luxury ; but in looking at the man for whom things had been made so easy one felt sure by instinct that if everything had been made hard, his will would have been found harder ; that, if he had had to fight his way, the need to battle would have multiplied his success not merely by three, but by four. It seemed like waste of strength, that he should have been able to do with his own hands more than Fortune, uncompelled and unsought, had done for him. He was a tall, powerfully-made man of about forty years old, with the fine hands of an artist, the heavy, full brows of a *savant*, the keen eyes of a financier, and the muscles of a prize-fighter ; and such want of harmony as might be the outcome of such opposite expressions was atoned for by the absence of any danger-signal which might mean passion. Nobody could doubt that the man was master of himself as well as of his art, and of the artists who were proud to serve under him. His ancestor in Art, the great Benvenuto himself, must have suggested a yet more extreme want of harmony, with a like significance of power.

And, in effect, Pascal Fénix had escaped every dangerous kind of passion as much as any strong man can who lives where pleasure is cheap and who could buy it if it were dear. A man who loves Art for Gold's sake, and Gold for Art's sake, and with whom Gold means Art, and Art means Gold, has his life well filled : smaller passions belong to emptier lives. Houses are the faces of the lives that are lived in them, and the house of Pascal Fénix was like its master's soul, all for the deep content of buried truth, and nothing for outer brilliancy. He had neither wife nor partner, and needed none. It was enough for him to give his forenoons to his workmen, his afternoons to his clients, and his evenings to an alternation of quiet study and temperate pleasure. He had never known, at forty years old, a temptation or a trial ; and, though both a goldsmith and a man of the world, was practically ignorant of such an alphabetical axiom as that the fire which is needful to work gold with is ten times more needful for the working of what is far more than gold.

He was not even disturbed in his almost Epicurean calm by the rough places into which the ship of business so often enters, for the simple reason that there were no rough places in his sea. His method was simple—he never permitted them. He was despotic in never hurrying himself and in never allowing others to hurry him: not even an empress—nay, not even a *prima donna*. He was proud of being exact to the moment, both in work and in pay, and ensured his punctuality by exacting it from others and by multiplying every estimate of time by two. His work was always doubly slow, and, perhaps, doubly dear; but it was always doubly perfect and doubly sure. Much might be learned by a careful study of the business axioms of Pascal Fénix. But it is the man himself with whom we have to do, as he sat one morning in the little office behind the front lumber-room which he called his shop and studied an account-book which he kept in cypher, his clerk standing behind him and waiting for questions.

'The *parure* of opals for my Lady Langford?' asked Pascal Fénix.

'It will be finished on Monday.'

'That is right. The gold necklace that Coulon is finishing for the Archduchess Stéphanie? I see it is due to be in my hands to-day, for delivery on Friday.'

'Marcel has gone to fetch it from Coulon.'

'Very well. The bracelet for Mademoiselle—I mean, for the Marquis de Mabile?'

'I have it here, Monsieur Pascal.'

'Two days too soon? But never mind. The tiara for—Come in! Ah, it is Marcel, with the necklace. Take pattern from Coulon, my lad—he is a true artist; he is never too late or too soon by a single hour.'

The lad who had brought the necklace home from the designer and maker—for Coulon was both in one—was young to have been trusted with so important an errand as carrying a necklace for an Archduchess through the streets, for he could not be more than sixteen. But Monsieur Pascal knew whom to trust, which is more important than knowing whom to mistrust, and did not think, as many do, that bright eyes and a handsome face are always given by nature to deceive men as well as women. But he could also read moods in faces as well as characters; and a look in the face of the lad made him suddenly exclaim:

'But *have* you the necklace? Is anything wrong?'

'Yes, monsieur,' answered the boy very gravely, as he laid down a leather case on the desk before his master. 'Monsieur Coulon is dead, monsieur.'

Monsieur Pascal did not start or speak one word. Do not men die every day, in the workshop as well as on the battle-field? But he opened the case—for, whether all Paris lived or died, a certain gold necklace was to be delivered to the Archduchess Stéphanie in three days. He opened it—and what a sight of despair met his eyes! Coulon must have surely gone stark-mad before dying. A twisted, battered, shapeless mass of metal, such as a child might have hammered and twisted out of lead, was the whole outcome of six months' thought and labour.

Then, indeed, Monsieur Pascal turned pale. This was worse, indeed, than the death of a man. It was the spoiling of good gold.

'I saw the physician, and I saw Madame Coulon,' said young Marcel, still more gravely. 'Monsieur Coulon would let nobody, not even Madame, see him at work—he used to lock himself up day and night: he said it was to be his *chef-d'œuvre*. Madame knew his ways: but she got frightened when he did not leave his workroom for twenty-four hours. When they broke in they found Monsieur Coulon beating the necklace into—That, monsieur. It would have been very beautiful. See there.' He pointed to a fragment of the mass which still showed evidence of sane design, and which might, to eyes trained to judge of processes, represent beauty. 'The physician said that too much work had made him mad, monsieur. He had brain fever. And then he died.'

'It is terrible!' said Monsieur Pascal. 'What business had the fellow with dying? His business was to deliver that necklace, finished, to-day—to be worn by the Archduchess in three! It is horrible. What is to be done?'

In effect, Coulon was in the place of a captain who had deserted his post, which was life, at a moment when his place could not be supplied. What, indeed, has a workman to do with death when it costs an Archduchess a necklace, and his master a reputation in Imperial eyes? Monsieur Pascal felt that *he* would not have died or gone mad with his work undone; and it was the first time that an employé of his had ever taken such a liberty.

It is possible that some may even yet be unable to realise the full horror of the situation. That Monsieur Pascal should lose the service of an artist like Coulon was simply inconvenient; to supply his place would be troublesome, but by no means impossible, and the great goldsmith had already worn out enough brains in his service to take small heed of one more. But it was his pride, amounting to a point of honour, that he had never yet failed in a matter of either work or time; and, in this particular case, the wearing by the Archduchess of this special necklace on

this special Friday was of the essence of the bargain. It was because of his faithfulness as well as because of his artistic reputation that she had come to Monsieur Pascal; and if he failed in this instance, he might as well have been failing all his days. It was a case in which one failure would undo the repute of years; for the Archduchess was more than only an Archduchess: she was a woman whose word could make or mar, and the appearance of this necklace round her throat on Friday was to be an era in the history of Caprices and of the skill which compels all the elements to serve them. And now, even if a second Coulon could be found and hired in a moment, he could not, without magic, force gold to obey the will of the Archduchess in three days.

For the first time in his life Monsieur Pascal guessed what *is* meant by despair. He could not even get a little barren comfort by dismissing Coulon from his service for the rest of his day. And yet how was it possible for him to send Marcel with a message to the Archduchess, that he, Pascal Fénix of the Rue Duguesclin, had failed? To succeed might be impossible, but confession would be worse than impossible: it would be dishonour. It was no unheard-of phase of mind—Pascal Fénix fell like Leonidas before Thermopylæ.

But, after the first moment, Leonidas himself could not have regarded despair itself more calmly. Only two pairs of eyes were upon him—only the clerk's and Marcel's—but a straw will give strength to a strong man. He examined the mangled and mangled corpse of the necklace inch by inch and point by point: it was past revival, even if Coulon's design still survived. And if, as was likely enough, the madman had destroyed his design as well as his work, just enough remained, as Marcel had pointed out, to show that it was henceforth inimitable. It was not one of those works in which one link revealed the secret of the whole like a bone to Cuvier. And he knew of old that the Archduchess was herself a skilled critic as well as a connoisseur. So far as she was concerned, he knew that he might just as well hand over his business to Wertheimer et Cie., and the rest of the great world would follow the lead of the Archduchess as surely as the tide follows the moon. 'Go,' he said to the clerk and Marcel. 'I will take over this affair.'

But his difficulty was not to be moved by thought or will. The necklace before him was so utterly dead as to suggest nothing. Whether magic there may be in works of art goes out with their beauty, which is their soul: there was no magic in the mere lifeless gold. And so, as the long minutes went by, his thoughts turned to magic. Magic, indeed? Nothing less than magic

would serve the Archduchess Stéphanie: no less a power than that of the King of the Gnomes. Monsieur Pascal was a man of a strong mind, who believed in nothing but business, and in nobody but himself, now that Coulon was gone. But, with that thing before him, some unseen prompter at his mind's elbow made him exclaim, aloud:

'If there were a Devil, and if he were half as good a goldsmith as Coulon, I would sell him my soul, if I had a soul to sell. But—— Here again, Marcel? Did I not tell you I wished to be alone?'

'It is a lady who wishes to see Monsieur Fénix,' said the lad, as if to be a lady meant to have the right of entering everywhere.

'Do you know her? Is she from the Archduchess Stéphanie? No? Then tell her I am engaged.'

'I have told her so, monsieur.'

'Then tell her so again.'

'I have told her so again. But she said——'

'Well?'

'That she would rather see you than Messieurs Wertheimer.'

It was only for a moment, after all, that Monsieur Pascal forgot that he was a man of business, and that he who misses a chance does not deserve the name. That of his actual rivals, his too probable conquerors, recalled him to himself.

'She is a lady?' he asked, a little absently.

'A real lady,' said Marcel.

'Very well. I will see her,' said Monsieur Pascal, with impatient patience. 'Show her in.'

Marcel's opinion of a real lady differed considerably from the general opinion. In Monsieur Pascal's eyes his visitor did not look up to the mark even of a lady's-maid. He only saw in her a sad, fragile-looking young woman, dressed poorly in black, with tired and anxious eyes, carrying in her hand a small parcel wrapped up in an old newspaper. In his present mood, with a desperate, if not lost, battle upon his mind, he could still manage to feel vexed at such an intrusion, and with Marcel for having, for once, been so dull-witted as to mistake a genteel beggar for a possible customer of the Messieurs Wertheimer.

The best way of dealing with all such people is to give and have done with them. It was some comfort, after all, that she had not come from the Archduchess Stéphanie.

'You are Monsieur Fénix—himself?' she asked. And then the goldsmith started. His nerves were sharply strung, and her voice, for all its respectful softness, seemed to make them vibrate, like a harp in the wind.

'I am he,' he answered, sharply and brusquely. 'Who are you?'

'My name is Marie Renouf, monsieur.' She stopped, and waited, as if to see whether the name meant anything to him.

But, for some hidden reason, the very sweetness of her voice as she pronounced the name of Renouf jarred him into anger. If she had really come to beg, her visit was certainly singularly ill-timed.

'Marie Renouf? Why don't you say at once you are the wife of Louis Renouf—who had double my chances, and threw them all away into the gutter? I see. It is like him to have dragged a woman into his own ruin, to double it for both of them. It is like him when he is starving—as he bound himself to do—to turn beggar: and to send his wife to beg for him. Yes, I remember Louis Renouf better than he thinks for. He might have been another Coulon, but he chose to be—well, never mind what he chose to be. You will know better than I can tell you what it means to be the wife of a——'

'I am his widow, Monsieur Fénix,' she answered him. As he was speaking a tinge of colour had been coming into her face, like a thin flame. Drunkard, ne'er-do-well, black sheep—whatever name Pascal Fénix had been about to call Louis Renouf, stood rebuked before it had reached the air.

'And,' she went on, after the slightest pause, 'the mother of his little girl. It is true, monsieur, that my husband did not die so rich as if—as if he had been a—as if he had been made different, monsieur. But it is God who makes us all, monsieur, and no doubt makes us all as we ought to be made. My husband was a man of genius, monsieur,' she said proudly. 'And he would never have begged while he lived, nor let me beg for him.'

'Then,' asked the goldsmith, roughly, 'why do you come to me?'

'It is not his fault that my little girl is starving—it is mine. It is because I am fit for nothing, monsieur, except to sit down and cry—not that I have not tried. Ah! it is my fault that he left a fool to take care of his little one. But I don't come to beg, monsieur, even now. He often used to speak to me of you, and of how rich and great you are, and the best friend of art in all the trade. I could not help thinking of you when my little Bertha was fading for want of food. And I did not think he would be angry if for her sake I part with this for a little while. He bade me swear to keep it in my own hands, because he thought it his *chef-d'œuvre*—my poor Louis! See here, monsieur.'

She opened the old 'Moniteur' and laid down before Monsieur Pascal what it contained. And then—had the very King of the

Gnomes in person obeyed the goldsmith's invocation, infidel as it was in form after all?

Talk of Coulon—talk of the Archduchess Stéphanie! Here was a golden necklace such as Coulon could never have dreamed of imagining: such as no Empress had ever worn. And, by rights, if the conception of it had required one man's life, the execution should have demanded another's. It was the outcome either of a combination of supreme skill, patience, and courage, or else of sheer genius, unless indeed that last word be not simply a conventional expression for the other three. It consisted of three hundred and sixty-five links, forming one simple and perfectly graceful whole, but each treated separately and one by one, so as to give the history of a whole year of life day by day. At the same time, if looked at with fresh eyes, each five links represented a space of one year, from birth to death, in a life of seventy-three. A Chinese artist of exceptional skill might have worked with equal minuteness of detail upon the little golden links, and some idle poet might have amused himself by imagining a few of them; but there could not have been two men in the world to design and carry out the whole of such a labour for the sake of making some woman's throat and bosom a little more worthy of being examined closely.

But Monsieur Pascal thought neither of the labour nor of its waste. He only felt his feet planted firmly on the ground once more; and he drew a deep, relieved sigh. On the spur of the moment, he said nothing. But he let his strong, hard eyes rest, with a very different look in them, upon the pale face of Marie Renouf, half-timid and half-eager. The peculiar character of her beauty was beginning to make its way, and the goldsmith was free once more to feel anything he pleased. He forgot that he was a man of business on the threshold of a bargain when he said:

'Louis Renouf made this? It is impossible—it is divine! Yes, madame—you have done well to come to me. He did not live in vain after all, for he has saved *me*. I will ask for no profit—that would not be fair: it shall be as if your husband had made this to order for the Archduchess Stéphanie. Leave me the necklace. Tell me where you live, and I will bring you—I will send you at once a draft for twenty-five thousand francs, madame. It is as much as I shall receive; and Coulon would have had but ten thousand for that thing there.'

The goldsmith felt the glow that comes from justice and generosity—at least, he thought so, for he did not recognise them from any personal experience of them, and had no means of distinguishing it from the sudden relief of an escaped danger and from the vibra-

tion through him of a voice which somehow seemed to him the most divinely sweet he had ever heard. His eyes were fully as much upon Madame Renouf as upon the necklace which a marvellous chance had brought him, in the very nick of time, from the land below the earth—from a dead man's grave. He could face twenty Archduchesses now; and meanwhile he faced Madame Renouf, with an emotion that was strange to him. After all, it is not altogether for nothing, though he may not know it, that so good a man of business foregoes all profit on an outlay of twenty-five thousand francs. The young widow belonged as little to his world as real passion had belonged to it hitherto.

‘I do not ask you to buy the necklace,’ she said, still numbed a little by the manner in which the tradesman had spoken of the dead artist, her husband. ‘It is not mine to sell. But it will be safer in your hands than in a garret cupboard—I only want bread for my little one—nothing more.’

‘How? Not yours to sell? Then it is not yours to pawn. Not yours?’

‘I told you—it is my husband's, monsieur.’

‘When he is dead? That is absurd.’

‘I am his wife, monsieur. Not till he died, but till I die. It is the same.’

‘And I tell you on the word of a man of reason it is absurd. Death is divorce, and necessity is above law. You are as free to dispose of that necklace for—for your child's sake, as you are to—to marry again.’ It was a new thing for Monsieur Pascal to stammer over a bargain; but all that he now felt before Marie Renouf was new. If his invocation had not called the Devil to his elbow, it seemed to have called up something else which was quite as bewildering.

Was it that for the first time he had met with a will that was stronger than his own? It was unlikely enough that this fragile woman, all made of mist and shadow, should be stronger in her stupid obstinacy than such a man, whose firmness was already being emphasised by the accent of passion, and who had a motive besides for the acquisition of this particular piece of gold-work, which meant more to him than such a common thing as death could mean to her or to any woman. But, unlikely as it was, so it seemed to be. She had come to him as a banker, because her husband had trusted him; but she could no more be made to understand that she had a right to disregard his love's last caprice, that his *chef-d'œuvre* should be hers alone for ever, than that he had ceased to live only because he had died. The goldsmith argued and argued, but in vain, against her woman's ‘No.’

‘Very well, then,’ he said at last. ‘It must be as you will. Leave me the necklace, and call to-morrow morning, when I will have a proper agreement ready for you to sign. Meanwhile, here is a draft, on account, for five hundred francs—that will last you till then, I presume.’

She put the necklace solemnly and closely to her lips, and then laid it down again, whispering, ‘Only for a time!’ Then she took up the draft, which meant life for Bertha, and said, in a tone that seemed to mix with the blood in his veins, ‘Thank you, monsieur.’

As soon as she had left the door he said to Marcel, ‘Follow that lady. Find out where she lives, and how.’

Left once more alone, Pascal Fénix examined the masterpiece of Louis Renouf link by link, and point by point; and he found it in truth an art-marvel. But it was not only as a critic that he studied it, without lifting his eyes, for the better part of two hours. It was too impossible a piece of mockery on Fortune’s part that he should have this *chef-d’œuvre* in his hands, and yet that his fulfilment of his pledge to the Archduchess should be as impossible as ever: for he could not sell what was not his own. ‘Thou shalt not covet . . . nor anything that is thy neighbour’s,’ was a command beyond keeping with what his life felt to be its very salvation in his hands. It was preposterous that a starving woman should refuse, for five-and-twenty thousand francs, to part with a caprice and to sell a memory. It was outrageous that such tyranny should be exercised by a dead hand. And yet he knew, as surely as that he sat there, that the great work of that hand was sacred just because the hand was dead and because the heart which had inspired the hand had loved her. Something was already teaching him that there were limits even to the philosophy of Pascal Fénix, and that Marie Renouf, if but a shadowy phantom in such a world as his, was a strong reality in another and an unknown world.

As his fingers moved along the dead man’s legacy, hatred for the dead man stole in at the tips of them. But it was not—and he knew it himself—only because the dead man’s hand still clutched the gold links and kept them from him. He had noticed the very spot where Marie’s lips had kissed them when she whispered, ‘Only for a time!’ That spot in the design represented Winter; and it had been made sweet and warm beyond the nature of gold. The man was forty years old, and had never known passion. Link by link, he was learning it now. Which was it—the necklace or the wife’s heart, that he was coveting? Or was it both in one—the beauty of the gold for the heart’s sake, and the heart for its own?

His whole past life of prosperous peace felt bitterly barren, but not half so barren as the desert that now lay before.

And yet he had seen Marie but once. But then he had never yet denied himself a desire, and this was the once for all of a passion. One may mistake a fancy for a passion, but never a passion for a fancy, when it comes. It was not the less passion because it was complex, while passion, by right, is simple; because it made him feel, in the reasonable part of him, that he desired Marie more because of the necklace, and the necklace more because of Marie. The two were so completely one that when he pressed his lips where she had pressed hers the gold gave him back some of the warmth that her breath had left there.

He was still absorbed in Louis Renouf's masterpiece, speculating now upon the possibility, now upon the impossibility, of delivering it instead of Coulon's to the Archduchess Stéphanie, and now forgetting it in the dreams of a fuller life which it suggested to him by more than the magic of gold, when Marcel returned. It had not needed a professional detective to follow the lady through her hasty purchases and then to her poor lodging in the Rue Ste.-Odille. Pascal Fénix put the necklace away in his strongest safe, without having shown it to a soul, and deposited therewith a formal receipt of it, with particulars, from Madame Renouf—he would have done so had the end of the world been hard at hand, for not even the very passion of twofold covetousness had suggested to him, even in so much as a random thought, the idea of its acquisition by unfair means. Above all things, he was an honest man; he had always been too rich to be otherwise. But, wellnigh as soon as his place of business had been barred for the night, and giving himself barely time to dine, he went, on foot, to the address which Marcel had found for him.

But it was not a mere sudden, hungry passion that had come, hand in hand with greed, into the life of Monsieur Pascal. What man is not bound to meet with love at last—if not early, then late? too late, it may be, but still some day. He was no *roué*—perhaps his nature was too set and hard for such waste of gold, energy, and time. In his very pleasures he had always been his own master. But now, at one woman's one word, all had been changed. For whom, for what end, had he spent the better half of his life in gaining gold and golden fame? Death, when a man loves, becomes for the first time more than a word. He had not so much as a favourite nephew to carry down the name of Fénix and to inherit the treasures which had come to him through his own father. Already he was entering upon middle age, and, with all his wealth, was still as homeless as a tramp who has escaped from the galleys.

He had never thought of that ; but he thought of it now. And, turn his mind which way he might, whenever they fell upon a vision of homelight, the wife from whom it was shed was for ever Marie Renouf and no other. And indeed who else should it be ? That she was beautiful went without saying—and of that kind of shadowy, open-winged, filmy beauty which had an especial piquancy for this man of muscle and bone. That she was of a tender and faithful nature was only too clear. And, in short—

He had reached the house in the Rue Ste.-Odille ; it was precisely as it had been described to him by Marcel—just one of those houses on whose ninth story a woman and child may be supposed to starve. There was a light, like a star, high up on the garret floor, and he knew that it was hers. And then, as if he were a lover of twenty who can live for a whole day on such sparks of air, he turned round and went home again, half-ashamed of himself for being so little of a man, and yet feeling more human than he had felt since he was ten years old.

Well, she would call the next day, and he would see her alone. Half the night he lay tossing about ; the other half he dreamed of Coulon. Then, after breakfast, he went into his inner office, but he did nothing there. He did not even look at the necklace ; the clock had all his eyes. But, at last, Marcel announced :

‘ A lady to see monsieur.’

He did not ask if it was a real lady this time. He had made no definite plans, but he knew what he wanted ; and then there entered—not Marie Renouf, but a lady according to all the rules, whom he knew, before she spoke, to have come from the Archduchess Stéphanie. In a word, it was no other than Mademoiselle Von Mohacz, a middle-aged lady, who was to the Archduchess what a minister plenipotentiary is to a queen, and even what a premier has been known to be.

‘ Her Imperial Highness is anxious beyond words, monsieur. She has passed a sleepless night—and so have I. Coulon dead ! Can it be true ? ’

‘ Only too true, madame.’

‘ But the necklace is finished ? That will be ready, without fail ? ’

It was like asking a merchant whose solvency is above scandal, ‘ Your bill is due in three months—will it be met and paid ? ’ It was like asking a man of honour, ‘ Your word is given—will it be kept when the time comes ? ’ Such questions are insults, and deserve only to be met with an indignant ‘ Yes,’ at all hazards ; for even a day’s grace is enough time for a man to try at least to keep his word, and his word is kept until he has tried to the end and

failed. Moreover, if the necklace in the safe was not literally Coulon's, it was more fit for the Archduchess than even Coulon's would have been. And if he had said 'No,' he knew perfectly well that the ambassadress was empowered to go straight to Messrs. Wertheimer and see what they could find for her.

He drew himself up with an air of proud surprise.

'Is it likely that I should let a man's death disappoint her Imperial Highness, madame?'

'Ah, you take a load off our mind. It is finished, then? And since Coulon is dead, it is in your hands. That a man should have died in making it—ah, that is charming; that will give it double *prestige*. We will see it—now.'

'Now, madame?'

He scarcely hesitated; but mademoiselle's ears were as sharp as a lynx's eyes.

'If you please—since it is in your hands. Another fit of insomnia—surely it is here, since it is finished? And since it is in your hands, it is in ours. Her Imperial Highness may require some alteration before it is worn.'

He knew he was being doubted, and that he could not bear. And after all the necklace *was* there; and it would surely be his own in a few hours. It might not be honest to the letter to show Louis Renouf's work for Coulon's, or Marie's property for his own. But honour before honesty. He told no lie in opening the safe and in laying the necklace before the eyes of Mademoiselle von Mohacz without a word.

'Ah, mon Dieu, but it is from heaven! It is sublime! Ah, he was a great man, your Coulon, and he is dead because he has made this out of his soul. . . . We will take it with us, monsieur.'

'Pardon, madame. Friday was the day named—and in all things I keep my word—as you see.'

It was these punctilious caprices of his that had earned him at least his fame; and he would have lost credit in the eyes of Mademoiselle von Mohacz herself if he had yielded in an unessential detail. But the Archduchess would call to-morrow in person to see the Great Necklace—the 'Necklace of Life and Death,' so mademoiselle vowed it should be named, in respect of the subject of its design, combined with the death of its maker. So pleased was she with her own fancy that she insisted less strongly on carrying it off with her than she would otherwise have done. And so, when she left the goldsmith, it was still safe in his hands.

What mattered it, after all? A plan was now in his mind; and, even if it failed, no woman would coquette very long with twenty-five thousand francs—it was absurd. And she would be

here in an hour, the owner of the necklace—Marie Renouf—Marie.

But an hour passed, and she did not come; and then another hour, and then another, and then the whole morning, and then the whole afternoon. Once more Pascal Fénix hurried off to the Rue Ste.-Odille; and this time he did not run away from the door. His need was great, and his hunger of anxious love was greater still.

A little more comfort had, even in one day, found its way into the bare garret since Marie Renouf's visit to the Rue Duguesclin. She had been able even to fit up a second room, hitherto empty, so that Bertha might sleep into strength without being disturbed by the late burning of the candle by which the mother toiled at her needle into all hours. Bertha was sleeping now, and the door between the two rooms was closed. Marie was working and thinking together, as some women can in whom 'I work' and 'I think' mean simply 'I feel.' There was no need for Marie to think out why she had not paid a second visit to her banker. Something in his manner, which any woman could read, had made her wish that she had gone to the commonest of pawnbrokers even with such a sacred thing as her husband's master-work. Five hundred francs were more than she had looked for; it was almost too much, for the greater the advance the less chance she had of repaying it soon. A hundred would have gone far towards keeping off the wolf till Bertha got well. She was no woman of business, poor as she was; and, in effect, she knew well enough that only as a last resource would she visit the Rue Duguesclin again. And it was, of course, while she was thinking of her banker, though by no means as he would have her think of him, that he entered her room.

'Have I frightened you?' he asked, with rough gentleness, which frightened her a little more. 'Pray forgive me. Of course I was the last whom you were looking to see. But—you see, business is business, madame.' He sat down, and as far from her as she could desire. 'You were to see me this morning; and, as the mountain did not come, Mahomet must—that is all. You remember that I offered you, on the spur of the moment, twenty-five thousand francs for your necklace. Now, in cold blood, I make the same offer again.'

'Will you please to speak low, monsieur? Bertha—my little girl—is ill, and asleep in the next room. A thousand thanks, monsieur, for what I hope will make her well. I want nothing more.'

‘But—a fortune—for Bertha, madame!’

‘When I am dead, monsieur, Bertha may do with the necklace as she will. I cannot help things then. But it is not mine to deal with, till then.’

‘Your feeling is beautiful—like yourself; but your reasoning is absurd. Listen to me, madame.’ He placed his arms on the table and leaned a little forward. ‘I know what Louis Renouf would have said were he still alive. He——’

‘He is alive,’ said the woman who could do nothing but feel.

‘That is nonsense—mere sentimental nonsense. He is dead, and there is an end. He was a—never mind what—but you must know as well as I that he would have sold his soul for a bottle of wine. And——’

‘Monsieur! I am his wife!’ and she half-rose.

‘For two bottles, then. Pray hear me—pray sit down. I cannot think with patience of *your* being *his* widow—of having been *his* wife—of having—of having been any man’s: it is enough to madden me. And—when you persist in killing yourself and your own child for a crazy whim that he would have been the last to understand! Listen. You are poor: your toil has not been enough to keep your child from death’s door. You are friendless and alone, and you love your child; and you are beautiful, and young—and that, in such a case, is the worst of all: for you are in Paris, you understand? What do you think will be the end? I am rich; I am honourable; I stand first in my craft in Europe; I have few faults, and no vices. And I am in the prime of life, and have never yet loved a woman. And I love *you*.’

‘Monsieur!’

‘Yes—it is true. I have come to save you from all ill. Be my wife, Marie.’

In spite of all her former fear she was too amazed to answer. She could only recoil towards Bertha’s door.

‘I know,’ he went on quickly, ‘that I can’t expect you yet to say you love me. You have only seen me once, though with me it was once for all. I will risk that. Marry me, because I can protect you and will try to make you happy—marry me for Bertha’s sake—don’t say you love me—if—if it is not yet true; but say yes, Marie. I love you with all my heart and soul.’

‘Ah—for heaven’s sake don’t wake the child!—No!—What have I done, that this should happen to me? Is it because I parted with—that—for even one hour? And that was for Bertha’s sake; but no—wrong is wrong——’

‘Hush! Don’t be mad, Marie! Think what it means to love you——’

She stepped a pace back towards him from the door.

'No. I have done wrong, monsieur. You are not tempting me, because I do not love you. I love one only; and, since he is dead, he will never die. If I were not still his wife, I could love no man after him. I thank you—since you mean well. But I have done wrong. He bade me never let his necklace leave my hands: and I have let it go. Give——'

'Marie! Do you expect me to take such a no—to give way to such childish folly? I——'

'If it is folly, you are too wise to want to marry a fool. I loved Louis, and I married him, once for all.'

'And you are a mother—and for your own child's sake——'

'For my child's sake I am true; and for mine, and for his, and for your own, monsieur. Ah, you reason, but I *know*.'

And it was plain even to him in his passion that she knew—once for all.

'It is not folly—it is madness.' His first passion, which had never dreamed for one instant of being seriously opposed, was joining hands with its next-door neighbour—rage. 'You refuse love, and devotion, and happiness, because you were once married to a man who drank himself to death and left you and his child to starve for a whim? Twenty-five thousand francs! I offer you millions, and throw myself in with them as a bagatelle. And I have never failed in having my will—never, since I was born. Shall I not have it the only time I have cared a straw to have it? What are millions to me, now, without you?'

'You would buy love, monsieur?' she asked, with the saddest scorn.

'Why not—if that is the only way? And if I cannot buy it with gold—I will have it all the same.' There was no danger of his waking Bertha. He was speaking low enough now. After all, it was monstrous that a woman should persist in refusing love, wealth, happiness, and Pascal Fénix. Perhaps she was one of those women who will never yield except to a whirlwind, and can only love a master.

'You would force it, then?' she asked, with a scorn more pitiful still.

Was it a challenge?

'Yes!' he said. 'I will have it anyhow.'

'And you have called Him—are you asking me to hate you, monsieur? Not that I suppose you will mind, in three days. I know what love means. For heaven's sake, let me thank you for saving Bertha, and then go and say no more. No word you can say can move me—not because you are you, but none that any

man can say. I am a wife, and I love—once for all. Don't fancy that time will change me. It will only change you——'

'Never!'

'I know. . . . And meanwhile I will reclaim my necklace; and here is all I have not spent of your money, and I will pay you back what I have spent as soon as I can. Forgive me, monsieur, for my last word—I have no other.'

Yes—and pledge the necklace with Wertheimer et Cie.!

How did such a thought tear through passion? How is it that a man's life is a granite rock which no tempest of passion can even move?

Marie scorned him; and the next day the Archduchess would come to see her necklace, and would go to Messrs Wertheimer and would find it there. Was he to risk losing Marie for such an end?

'*Let him that thinketh he standeth. . . .*' It is ill to preach, but the words will come. The strong man rose and trembled. Those who have learned to know him will know what inextricable chaos of steadfast rock and raging sea was at work within him.

'I will not restore the necklace, and I will not lose you.'

The words were enough to make her know him and hate him, and he knew that as soon as they had left his tongue.

'You have never found me to lose,' said she. 'Here is your money for you.'

'You will not have the necklace, which your drunken lover made to save *me*. And I will not have your money. I will have it, and you too.' He did not tremble now, nor did she. But he moved towards her, cold with need of her treasure, on fire with need of her. 'Yes—or no?'

'No—once for all.—Ah!' There was one plain way to gain the necklace, even though it lost him her. 'Ah——' she screamed in a choking whisper, for one of his strong hands was upon her fragile throat, and was pressing harder than it knew.

'Yes—or no?'

'No!—Ah, for the love of God, don't wake the——'

What had he done? He had not waked the child—and the necklace was his own.

II.

STILL, after seven long years, the house of Pascal Fénix, goldsmith and jeweller, stood in the middle of the south side of the Rue Duguesclin. But it was not Pascal Fénix who, seven years later, sat at the desk in the private counting-house. It was young

Marcel Riche, who was looking over the account-books as if he were master, though too young for such a place, one would think, being but seven years older than seven years ago.

His task did not seem to please him—and no wonder; for the entries where the house appeared as debtor were many and large: those where it stood as creditor were very few and very small. In truth, things were very different now from what they were when he was a boy. Ever since that visit of her Imperial Highness the Archduchess Stéphanie, when she came to claim a finished necklace and found only a lump of gold beaten out of all shape by a madman, things had gone wrong. She had, very naturally, transferred her patronage to the house of Wertheimer, and the great world had followed her. There had been a little mystery about the matter into the bargain, for Mademoiselle von Mohacz was positive that Coulon had died before the accident, and could not be persuaded out of her error by the united testimony of Marcel, Madame Coulon, and the physician, backed by the notoriously trustworthy word of Pascal Fénix. But the mystery had not been worth solving. The Archduchess went off, her ambassador obtained credit as a singularly interesting instance of the effects of insomnia upon the imagination, and the goldsmith was left alone—and a great deal too much alone. For first he lost his best clients, then his second-rate ones, then his best workmen, then his confidential clerk; until at last he was left with nobody but Marcel Riche to act as foreman, book-keeper, and salesman, all in one. It is true that the pluralist held something very like a sinecure, for his designs were never worked, and the state of the books made their keeping more vexatious than troublesome. And yet he stayed on, though the house of Fénix seemed falling about his ears; and he did his best, even to the point of setting out, to catch stray and passing customers, the window in which anything like vulgar display had once been held profanation.

No doubt such fidelity demands respect. But it sometimes receives more respect than it deserves. And yet it could hardly be the pleasure of peddling and of carrying balances to the wrong side of the ledger that had made Marcel Riche serve Pascal Fénix as long as Jacob agreed to serve Laban.

He was deep in a hideous column of debts when a graceful and tolerably pretty girl, of about seventeen or eighteen, came into the counting-house, and stood patiently by the safe until Marcel had come to an end of his calculations; and then, as soon as he turned round and looked at her, the smile which lighted up his whole face and found a very fair reflection in hers showed plainly enough that fidelity *itself* does not account for all things;

and that Bertha Renouf, the motherless orphan of an old friend and comrade whom Pascal Fénix had adopted out of charity when he was rich, about seven years ago, had a good deal to do with keeping Marcel where he was now.

‘Have you done your sum?’ asked she.

‘Yes,’ he said, a frown making an inroad upon the smile. ‘At least, I should have done it if I could only prove to my satisfaction that three thousand eight hundred and ninety-six francs are equal to fifteen.’

‘Well, never mind now. No doubt you’ll do it very well next time. I want to speak to you now.’

‘Oh, there’s plenty of time for sums like that. They’re things that one can go at again and again.’

‘It’s about Monsieur Pascal, Marcel.’ That was the half-familiar, half-respectful name by which the goldsmith was known in his household of three, of whom not one was related to the other.

‘Is he no better to-day?’

‘Not the least better.’

‘I can’t make it out, dear Bertha. And he always seems so strong in the afternoon. Of course there’s only one thing to be done.’

‘Ah, I thought *you* would know! What is it, Marcel?’

‘Send for a doctor.’

‘How odd!—that is what I said to him myself this very day. How strange it is that we always think the same about everything! But——’

‘But——? I hate *But*, Bertha.’

‘So do I—how strange again! But he won’t see a doctor—and you know what Monsieur Pascal is when he says he won’t,’ she said, with a sigh.

‘I do know,’ said Marcel. ‘But we must be two to one. You don’t see him, as I do, every day, and sometimes all day long. In the afternoon, when he has breakfasted, he is just his old self—grave and silent, as he always was, but strong and well, and bearing—well, our troubles, like a hero. But in the evening he has a look—and in the morning, well, you do see him then—weak and weary like an old man who has half-died in a dream. Yes; we must have a doctor, Bertha—we will.’

‘Our troubles? What do you mean by our troubles, Marcel?’

‘I didn’t mean to say troubles—no, not exactly troubles.’

‘But you did say it. And if I tell you to tell me, you’ll.’

‘I suppose I shall. And you’ll have to know in time. Look

at these books—even I didn't know things were so bad till to-day. I am not so surprised, after all, that Monsieur Pascal objects to see a doctor, and to tell what's on his mind. You know what he is—how he holds honour before life—and quite right too. And if we don't meet our debts in a month from now, down we go; and if we do meet half of them, we haven't a centime left in the world—not one of the three. Ah, that madness of poor Coulon was a bad business—worse than it seemed.'

'Do you mean he will be——'

'Ruined. That's the word—not troubles. It doesn't matter for me. I can get a place—I may even be a tenth-rate Coulon—who knows? And I can tell you it would take a very fair workman to be a twentieth-rate Coulon. And when I get a place I can stretch it wide enough for three, if Monsieur Pascal isn't—ah, but that's it: he is too proud.'

'Does he know all this, Marcel?'

'Not all. If he did, I shouldn't wonder at his illness at all. I'm just working night and day to make things tide over, so that he mayn't be troubled more than he need be. Pray heaven something may happen to-day to prevent my having to tell him all before to-morrow—to-night, Bertha.'

'I do pray heaven,' she said.

Pascal Fénix would not have parted with that necklace to an empress for all the world. It was all that was left to him of the two short days of full life that he had ever known.

The 'Sentiment' of Murder! The words surely have a strange ring; and, except in the life of Pascal Fénix, there has never been such a thing in the life of any man. How had he come to kill Marie? That was not for him to know. Had he in truth killed a woman whom he loved with passion for the sake of possessing, and selling, three hundred and sixty-five prettily designed links of gold? It seemed so, for she was dead; and yet surely that could not be. Whatever stood for his soul rose up in indignant revolt against the horror of selling this thing for a blood-price—this beautiful dead thing, with a man's soul in it, and a woman's last kiss still warm thereon. No common remorse came upon him, hand in hand with his deed. He was strong enough, as yet, to know that what is once done cannot be undone, and that a man is not what he has been, but what he becomes. He took Bertha to his own home, locked the necklace in the great iron safe, and hid the key. No vulgar fear of human justice troubled him. No creature would suspect Pascal Fénix, of the Rue Duguesclin, of committing midnight murder upon a poor widow in the Rue Ste.-

Orlille. And no eye, save his and hers, and that of Mademoiselle von Mohacz, had seen the ostensible temptation.

Nevertheless, he came by rapid degrees to live in another world. It is so with every man who has once committed murder. Where is it said that the first and most awful result of that crime of crimes is the murderer's feeling that he has for ever become the brother in blood of all murderers of all time, from Cain, the first down to the last wretch who has been hanged for stabbing in a drunken brawl? Pleasure turned into a tragedy, and business into a heart-sick dream. He showed no signs of his state, for he had the advantage of always having been a grave, solitary, and self-contained man, and there were no eyes loving enough to watch him with the jealousy that only affection knows. But though he never set eyes upon the necklace, and would as soon have pried into his safe as into his own tomb, it seemed to him that the links of it were round his own neck night and day, and that the spot of winter, where the lips of Marie had breathed upon it, burned. He even caught a trick of touching the side of his neck as if to rub off a spider's web: but nobody noticed the trick for none cared.

However—there is always one comfort for a strong man who is no more than forty years old, if he has the teachings of science to aid him. In seven years' time he will be a new man. In the period he will have lost every minutest atom of his present murderous body, and each will have been replaced by a new and innocent atom. And if, as Monsieur Pascal's friends the philosophers have it, the soul is a function of the mind and the mind but a function of the body, then, clearly, with the body mind and soul will also be made new and be as innocent as a new-born child's. Fancy may dream of an immortal conscience; but reason and logic gave hope and comfort, and Monsieur Pascal clutched at them—it was only needful that he should live for seven years to be no more the lover and the murderer of Marie.

And the seven years passed—we know how. Why should Monsieur Pascal see a doctor? The wisest of physicians could not tell him half what he himself knew. He was more than forty and had never been a fool. It was when about six years of the seven had gone that he first felt in himself a slight, a very slight symptom of what Marcel Riche had observed in him. He knew that his affairs were not going well, but nobody who is strong and well and awake is troubled much by a dream. He used to go into his counting-house at noon, and, though the great iron safe was still there, he never showed the least sign of want of attention or want of courage. If the great house of Fénix was to

go, let it go—no man can fight against fate, and a pistol or a panful of charcoal could at any time, in Paris fashion, end all with honour. That was not worth thinking of till it came. And when the shop was shut he went to his books and his studies in the home which Bertha made for him—the girl whose parentage habit had well-nigh taught him to forget—and he slept at night as only those sleep whose hearts are either unworn or overworn: as only the very innocent and the very guilty can. It was in the morning, when he woke, that things were strange with him. He felt a strange, close, hard pressure round his throat, both without and within; the root of his tongue was hot and swollen, and there was a curious livid blackness round the eyes. If he had been a drunkard, like poor Louis Renouf, the symptoms would have explained themselves; but Monsieur Pascal was not one of the weaklings who find a shadow of comfort in wine. Nor was the effect of sleep upon him merely physical and visible. He never remembered the details of any nightmare, but he seemed to feel all the effects of one. As Marcel had said, he woke, as it were, every morning a year older instead of a day; and every morning these strange symptoms grew more and more marked until at times they grew absolutely intolerable. But a cup of coffee worked wonders, and by noon he was always ready to be himself again and to look forward patiently to the end of the seven years. Whatever might be his disease, he forgot it during daylight; and it was plainly as little connected with his past crime as with his advancing bankruptcy. He was growing out of the one, and for the other he was prepared.

If his condition in waking had been marked by the sensation of a recent blow on the nape of the neck and by a corpse-like pallor, his philosophy might have ascribed it to an occult sympathy with the *Mont à Regrets*, as commoner criminals call the guillotine. But then, even had this been so, it would have argued fear, and he felt no fear. One day, however, he said to himself, 'I will not sleep at all to-night, and will see what comes.'

When night came he lay down as usual, but resolutely kept his eyes wide open, having already prepared himself by the strongest cup of coffee that Bertha could make for him. But a deliberate vigil was harder to be borne than he had looked for. He not only had to keep off sleep, which is harder than to compel it, but he had to fight off the thoughts and the memories and the worse things that come after midnight to an excited and nervous brain. At last he seemed to fall into a condition that was indeed wakefulness in a sense, but not the wakefulness of daytime. He seemed to be lying in his bed, as Marie might in fancy be lying in her grave.

His whole heart seemed to go to her with a terrible longing, even while his right hand trembled with the pressure of her soft throat against its palm. He rose, hardly knowing what he was doing, except that he could lie there and thus no longer. He partly dressed himself and struck a light and went down into the counting-house where his hideously beautiful treasure acted as a magnet for this midnight life of his which, as yet, had been wholly unknown to him, and which even now was hardly to be distinguished from a strange and vivid dream. He sat down at the desk, with his candle before him and the iron safe at his right shoulder.

And then, at last, sleep came fairly upon him, and he dreamed, or seemed to dream.

He took the key of the safe from its hidden corner, and opened it easily—not with any of the trouble that might have been expected from a lock unused for more than six years. It was therefore, so far, no nightmare: that piece of evidence is conclusive on that score to all experienced dreamers. And there lay the Necklace—but not untouched since he had first put it there. Two hundred and seventy nights had gone of this seventh and last year of conscience, and of the three hundred and sixty-five links in the chain just two hundred and seventy had been removed. He counted them as they lay separate, but uninjured: an ordinary workman could have put them together again with ease. It was certainly a strangely vivid and coherent kind of dream. Then, with the utmost deliberation, and as if he were obeying a fixed habit or following a settled design, the goldsmith took a small tool and removed, this two hundred and seventy-first night, a two hundred and seventy-first link from the Necklace, and fastened what remained round his own full and muscular throat. The circle was too small to meet with ease, but, though of gold, it was as strong as steel—he had to force the ends to clasp, and the tightness pained him. But it was the most natural of acts—in a dream. All the sentiment belonging to Her necklace, all its fascination for him, and even the nature of its design, which represented every day in the year of a life one by one, made such a proceeding not only natural but inevitable at an hour and in a state of brain when fancy wakes up and becomes a law. Thus he sat till he could bear the tightness no longer, and till, for breath's sake, he was forced to remove the chain and to return it to its place again.

When he woke up next morning, annoyed with himself for having failed so completely to keep awake by will, he felt as if he had been half-choked with nightmare, and his familiar symptoms had returned slightly worse than yesterday morning. He made a stronger effort than usual to recall what had passed in his sleep,

and by slow degrees remembered the nature of his dream, first faintly, but at last plainly. So plainly, indeed, did he recall it at last that, absurd as it seemed to waking reason, it felt as if it had been no dream. Not even his coffee could drive its fumes away. So soon as Marcel was out of the way he went to the hidden corner where he kept the key, and which he had not visited since he had first locked the safe. The key was no longer there.

That also was strange, though not more strange than the way which all carefully hidden things have of losing themselves. He searched for it in every likely and unlikely place, but could find it nowhere. However, there was one satisfaction—if the key was lost, the dream had been only a dream and nothing more. Indeed, he was bound to be satisfied. He could no more have brought himself to force open the safe than he could have forced open the tomb which held the dead body of Marie Renouf and the dead soul of Pascal Fénix; and—if he could—the Necklace would have to be exposed to other eyes than his who dared not look upon it awake: the ghost of Marie would wake up and rise.

He was not conscious of such a trance again: he tried no more experiments with black coffee upon his nerves. As time went on any sort of sleep became too sweet to him for him to lose an hour. The memory of the trance became in due time more dim, as all memories will—even guilty ones. But, morning by morning, the same symptoms grew and grew. It was as if the dream were not a dream, but as if every night he bound that phantom Necklace, for which he had sinned, round his own throat with the hand that had encircled Marie's, with its links removed night by night, one by one: as if the necklace grew shorter with the year. It was no illusion, for an illusion is a matter in which one believes, and he did not believe. Nor did he, when awake, recall any fresh dream. But the consciousness of the first, though he ceased to remember it keenly, was still with him, just as a note, counting for nothing in itself, may give meaning and character to a chord: and it haunted him. And yet there was sweetness in it too. If the links lessened one by one with the days and nights of this last year—why, then, when the last link was gone, he would be new and free. His penance was a type, therefore, as well as a mystery.

What had such a life to do with physicians? It was not of their world. And at last, in spite of every morning's double weariness and pain, he began even to welcome the nights' rest for the very pain's sake. He began to dream of Marie in real dreams, and never as her murderer. If a dream Necklace in truth compressed his throat at midnight and left its stigmata behind, it was for her

he was suffering in the only way left him to suffer. The whole sensation was so shadowy and so unreal that he more and more came to believe in types and shadows and fancies as the only real things on earth—as indeed perhaps they may be. Business might be going to the dogs, but he could sleep; dishonour might be staring into his eyes, but he could shut his eyes and dream. It is easy to live sanely when the nerves have such a play-time as the dreams of Monsieur Pascal were.

But the matter-of-fact foreman and accountant, Marcel, who never dreamed—except, when he was awake, about Bertha—only saw the outer and more obvious signs of his master's disease, and felt it was simple, straightforward ruin that affected him, however bravely its approach might be borne. And now the approach was over, and the ruin had come, and must be openly told.

For himself the young man cared little. He was already, despite his modesty, much more than even a second-rate Coulon, and bade fair to be a second Louis Renouf one of these days. Freed from book-keeping for this broken house, he would be able to marry Bertha and to work till he could keep her and make a name; and the man who had adopted her would be his father too. But he knew Pascal Fénix, and his pride. He had worked desperately to bring things round; but Samson himself could not have kept up these falling rafters that belonged to the house of a man in a dream. That sum into which Bertha had broken was the last of a series that showed him how things really were. Nothing short of an actual miracle, like the discovery of a gold mine on the premises, or the descent of some marvel straight from the skies, would support the once famous house for two days more. And nothing had happened that day to prevent Marcel's having to tell his master the very worst before another night arrived.

Nevertheless, though without hope of being able to conquer the arithmetic of bankruptcy, he carried the books into his bedroom and set to work at them again instead of sleeping. His conscience was clear enough, Heaven knew—as clear as Bertha's own, and the thought of Bertha served for an angel to keep him company through the dark hours. But night is night, and has a dreary, creaking music of its own that day never hears. Marcel more than once fancied that he heard a stealthy footfall in that house whence the most expert of burglars would have gone empty away. But such fancies are too common after midnight for heeding. He went back heavily to his books, finished a balance-sheet of hopeless significance, and said to himself:

'To-morrow morning he *must* know.'

Before lying down for a little sleep he went down to the count-

ing-house to put the folios back in their places—for he, too, had his business maxims, and followed them. As he approached the door, treading nearly as lightly as the imaginary burglar, ‘How is that?’ he exclaimed in thought. ‘A light in the counting-house? Surely I haven’t been so absent as to have left a candle burning there all these hours—and when the price of a candle is something now in the Rue Duguesclin? That isn’t business-like, anyhow—and till daylight, too.’

He opened the door. And there, sure enough, mixed with the new daylight was the dying flare of a bedroom candle. But it had been brought, not left, there—and the safe, the sacred safe, on which no finger had been laid for seven whole years, stood with its iron door unlocked and wide open.

Had robbers been there, after all? And could that bankrupt house have contained even in its most sacred safe anything worth plundering? And——

For one moment Marcel stood aghast with horror. If robbers had come, assassins had come with them.

In his arm-chair before the desk sat, or lay back, Monsieur Pascal, as still as stone. He did not hear the door open. He did not see Marcel come in. He did not stir. Nay, he did not even breathe.

He must have died in defence of—nothing. He had no weapon, and was more than half-undressed, as if he had been hurriedly roused from sleep. Why had he not called Marcel to his aid? But there were no signs of any struggle. The collar of his shirt was turned back over the shoulders, and his broad, full chest was bare. But his face—that was a terrible sight to see. It was the figure, not the face, by which Marcel had known his master.

It was too late for any physician now. He could only throw a covering hastily over the features swollen, livid, and distorted beyond what pens may dare to tell, and then put himself, if he could, on the track of the assassins. The safe must have been forced open by some unusually skilful tool. But no—there was the key in the door. And, if the robbers had carried off any of the contents of the safe, they had left behind them what must have been the most valuable of all. It needed not the eyes of even a tenth-rate Coulon to set down those scattered links as the most marvellous feat in gold-craft that had ever been seen since the days of Cellini. And there was one piece of paper—a formal receipt of a Necklace which they had composed left in pledge with Pascal Fénix by Marie Renouf, widow of Louis Renouf, *orfèvre*, and dated—Marcel knew the date well: it was the day before Bertha’s mother had died.

Into what mystery of life and death had Bertha's lover taken his way? Hideous as the sight was, he conquered its repugnance and lifted the covering once more—instinct told him that no common death-stroke had fallen here. Cutting deep into the swart neck was the rest of the chain, clasped together so tightly a broken ends and strained with such force, in order to make it as sure as to have dealt justice as surely as the guillotine. And there, on the desk, lay the little tool by which yet one more link had been removed. It was not for Marcel to guess, nor perhaps for any but some brother in dreams to know. But, so surely as, or one, the nights had gone by, so surely had the links of *Madame's* Necklace lessened—one by one; until, even as he had trusted the right hand of Pascal Fénix had become that of a guilty man more.

So ends the mystery of the Rue Duguesclin, which, so far as we know, has never yet been told. The body of a bankrupt goldsmith was found one morning strangled with a necklace—that was all. And the necklace, having done its work, went back to its owner. But, if it is ever looked for on the neck of Madame Riche, it will not be seen. Good women do not care to play with things that mean men's lives and souls.

Pictures from Venice.

BY E. LYNN LINTON.

No place is so beautiful as Naples, excepting Venice. Not that the two are in any way alike ; for where Venice is supreme, Naples is inferior ; and what Naples has, Venice wants. For instance, the laughing, noisy, ragged Queen of the Mediterranean cannot be compared to the Bride of the Adriatic in architecture ; but the beauty of the surrounding country of the former is beyond anything that lies about the latter. Contrast the magnificent buildings on the Grand Canal with the strange jumble of squalor and commonplace sufficiency on the Chiaja ; the 'dead lagoons,' sluggish and shallow, where no waves dash into the grandeur of storm or leap into the life of foam and spray, with the living, bright Mediterranean sea ; the mystery of Vesuvius overshadowing the city—the green woods and purple hills of Castellammare—the noble curve of the bay to Massa here, to Cape Misenum there—Capri and Ischia set like jewels under the sun with the 'level waste of waters,' where the islands which break the monotony and rise round the greater cluster called Venezia, are without picturesqueness or boldness—merely floating villages anchored in the shallows—where Torcello and the Lido, the public gardens and the Campo Santo on San Michele, are the equivalents for the chestnut woods of Castellammare and the vineyards of Vico Equense, and where the whole is bounded by the distant snow-capped Alps and the mountain range about Vicenza, standing—beautiful, if you will—but like vapoury lines in the far distant horizon.

Still, though so unlike in many of their material features, both places have the same exquisite effects of sunrise and sunset, when the great dome of the sky becomes like one huge opal and the quiet waters reflect what lies above ; both are of extreme fascination and loveliness to those to whom they are lovely at all ; places of which the magic sinks deep into the heart, so that leaving them is a sorrow almost as great as parting from a friend, or turning for the last look to a lover. But are they not as lovers ? Is it not possible to fall in love, as the phrase goes, with a place as well as with a person ? It seems so ; for many fall so much in love with Italy as to make a return home a heart-break—or impossible. It is not love for one Italian, nor yet for the Italians *en masse*, be it understood ; but love for the country, the climate, the historical

associations, the unconscious beauty of the people, the sense of luxuriant life that is about one, the Idea of Italy—that country which has always stood as a queen among nations—that beloved sister whom all men loved and yearned after, and whom, in her day of trouble, all longed to help and defend. It is this deep and absorbing passion, or it is dislike. There are few to whom Italy is indifferent—who live here for convenience or for health, but who care for the place no more than they would care for a flat field in Lincolnshire, or for a modern villa in a London suburb. And if this is true of Italy in general, it is still more so of Venice and of Naples.

Naturally, one's first thought in Venice is St. Mark's—that glorious church, unique in splendour of design and grandeur of execution. Then comes the Doge's Palace, with its mournful Bridge of Sighs; and then the Grand Canal, where the palaces of the men who once ruled the world still exist as examples of perfectness in stonework unequalled rarely, surpassed never.

It is one of the supreme moments of life when we first land on the steps of the Piazza, right in front of the clock-tower, where the signs of the Zodiac serve for numerals, a sun is the pointer, and those two bronze Vulcans strike the hour on the big bell swung aloft. Before us are the famous columns:—that on the right bearing the Winged Lion, that on the left St. Theodorus with his crocodile—he who was the patron saint of Venice before the body of St. Mark was found and the greater claim set up. To the right again, stand the noble arches of the Procurazie Vecchie, running round two sides of the square formed by the Doge's Palace; to the left are the less beautiful Procurazie Nuove, concealing while forming part of the uninteresting modern royal residence. We cross the broad marble flags of the smaller piazzetta between these two series of arcades—pass the sculptured base of the Campanile—and into the Grand Piazza, where those three tall Venetian masts which once bore the banners of Cyprus, Candia, and Morea, but now the Italian tri-colour, stand before the portico of St. Mark's to give additional emphasis to one of the grandest things on the face of the earth.

Gold and colour and rare marbles sculptured into perfect form—an intricacy of line, a richness of idea that bewilders you like a labyrinth, and of which you cannot at the first moment gain a clear conception—cupolas standing out against the sky, grey and soft like giant pearls—saints and angels set between acanthus leaves to break the poverty of the bare outline—those four life-like horses, seeming as if they would spring from the heights where conquest placed them as a sign of how the old was vanquished by the new—

glass that glitters black and stern as steel as a foil to the broad expanse of gold and brilliant colour in the hollowed architraves over the doors—these are the first things that strike you as you look at St. Mark's from the outside, and strive to piece together into one clear whole all these separate circumstances of beauty.

Within, you come to the same bewildering profusion of loveliness. The pavement of mosaic, now broken and irregular, was once matchless for its rich designs and perfect workmanship; the high arched roof is ablaze with gold and colour, and the ornamentation about the windows and elsewhere is of exquisite design and finish, though to be clearly seen only through a glass of some little power. Every window indeed is a study that would repay days and days of careful noting and reverent copying. Costly marbles meet you everywhere; each column has its history, its tradition, its own beauty; gold and silver work, sharp and careful as the ornaments of women, make you wonder at the enthusiastic thoroughness of an age when 'scamping' was unknown; the bronze figures set round the high altar—the verde antique baldachino—and the 'pala d'oro,' that magnificent bit of goldsmith's work, shown now only on festas, attract you here; twisted translucent alabaster columns, hidden away in the dark behind the high altar, call you there; now you look at the double cross of silver and the worked silver lamps which hang from the high roof; and then you find in the Treasury a store of artistic wealth, one piece alone from which would be a fortune. For who would not hold himself rich beyond words with those candelabra by Cellini? with a diptych from St. Sophia? with one of those chalices of crystal, of agate, of wrought gold? with that cross of crystal, or that of gold, set with precious stones and holding still more precious relics? with the sword of the Doge Morosini, or the crosier of a bishop? with anything whatsoever out of this storehouse of glorious idea and noble endeavour—impossible to describe and impossible to land over-much?

Christian as St. Mark's is, and though Christianity would seem to be ever the same, it belongs to a period of thought and faith altogether different from that of to-day. The grave, grand, almost stern Mother of God is herself a goddess, and in no wise the same conception as that posturising, simpering French milliner who shows a burning heart beneath a blue mantle—and takes care to hold her hands in a becoming attitude while she does so—such as we see in the cheap coloured prints hung up to encourage the faithful at all the Mary altars. The saints and apostles are long-visaged, melancholy men to whom the sorrows of life are more patent than even its mysteries; Christ is less beautiful than he

was made of later date, but more real, appealing less to one's compassion as a suffering man and more to one's awe as a sacrificed God—all the representations breathe another spirit than that which informed the Christian world some three or four centuries after—and are infinitely more severe and less sentimental than our modern acceptances. The whole thing seems to have come from a people who lived in these ideas as part of their daily going and coming, and did not relegate them to Sunday worship as themes belonging to stated periods and not integral to the life itself. The same grave intensity is to be seen in the old church of Torcello—a gravity, an intensity, carried out to grimness and oppressiveness; suggesting somehow human sacrifice and suffering as the normal rule of life, and that wise men should give themselves up to the worship of sorrow and the recognition of pain as the lord of all living things.

You cannot stay too long in St. Mark's. Fascinating as it is, it is also overpowering; and the bright sunshine calls you out into the Piazza, where the glossy pigeons flock under your feet, eat out of your hand, perch on your shoulders, fight for a place on your arms, if you will buy a pennyworth of seed to scatter among them. It is part of the pleasantness of Venetian life to feed the pigeons in the Piazza; and an experience worth recording when the swish of their wings comes cleaving through the stillness, and the air is darkened by the multitudes that fly down from every point and corner, from every balcony and wall-band, roof and window, sill and shutter—wherever indeed their little pink feet can find a resting-place.

After St. Mark's, the great attractions are, of course, the buildings—especially the Doge's Palace, of which presently, and the palaces on the Grand Canal—some of them as glorious in their own way as that wonderful Byzantine Basilica which holds the body of St. Mark and some of the finest architectural details in the world. You take a gondola—with gay striped awning, if the day is warm and sunny—with the black hearse-like house, the 'felze,' if it is wet and cold—and with nothing at all, but open to sky and air, if it is soft and grey. These gondolas are the perfection of locomotion, as they glide almost without movement along the silent, still, and tranquil waters. You hear only the soft dip of the oars or the sharper splash which means steering and turning, as the boat shoots forward. It is a creature as sensitive as a well-trained horse, and apparently as instinct with life. A touch, and it stops; a twist of the wrist, and it swerves aside, just in time to escape the sharp prow of a sister boat shooting from one narrow canal to another; the little dolphins and sea-horses, reined in by the

small hand at the side, are the creature's spirit—its soul; and the high, sharp iron prow, in form like a halberd, is as its sense of sight and touch—the feeler that discerns, protects, and assaults, all in one.

Down the Grand Canal what a world of beauty greets you! On each side rise palaces of the grandest architectural perfection; but among them all, the Casa d'Oro stands supreme. How your ears drink in the old, well-known names! Here is the palace of the Contarini; there that of the Foscari, which, with that of the Balbi, command the two lengths of the canal situated as they are at the elbow; here the Pisani family hung out cloth of gold when the festa of the Foundation of the City called all loyal citizens to rejoice; and there, in that small modest house, the great Doge Enrico Dandolo lived—he who took Constantinople in 1204—and got for his country half the city itself, and the Adriatic littoral. Here comes the wide span of the bridge of the Rialto, bearing its shops crowded with barbaric jewelry and luscious fruit, and in the covered ways of which the merchants met and congregated; there is the splendid dwelling-place of Queen Caterina Cornaro, whom the republic treated with the respect and tenderness due to a devoted daughter after she had ceded her kingdom of Cyprus to her native city; here is the grey cipolino-faced Fondaco dei Turchi, restored as in the olden times, and destined to be the Museo del Correr, at present located in a tumble-down old barrack unworthy of a fifth-rate provincial town, not to speak of a city which was once an empire. Here is the palazzo of the Falieri, where Marino Falieri lived—he whose conspiracy against the nobles brought his own ruin and created a festa; and if you like to believe your smiling, soft-tongued gondoliere, there stands the house where Othello lived and Desdemona died; while one, perhaps more topographically impudent than the rest, and better up in what pleases 'gli Inglesi,' will point out to you Cassio's dwelling, and, if you are not too quick for him, Iago's. It is historically truer that in the centre of those three palaces, the Palazzo Mocenigo, Lord Byron lived and wrote, loved and suffered. Poor graceful sylph-like Taglioni has given her name to what was once the Palazzo Corner Spinelli, which she made warm with welcome and gay with dance and song in the days of her prosperity; and here comes the house where Luigi Manin, the last Doge, lived—he who abdicated in 1797, when the French came too near, after having voted for that 'unarmed neutrality' which handed the hitherto unconquered city over to the Austrians by the treaty of Campo Formio. We look at that house with dumb wonder and regret, and are glad that the name of the last great Duke was redeemed—at least by name, though not

by blood—when Daniele Manin took the lax reins in his strong patriot hands, and broke off the foreign yoke, if not at that moment completely, yet effectually for the future. For all that, we need not admire the ugly statue, with the stuffed bronze pincushion at the base of the column which does duty for the typical Lion of St. Mark's, raised to the great patriot's memory. Here is the palace where the Duc de Bordeaux lived; and there, that odd halved house which the brothers Frangini once owned and quarrelled over. They were joint inheritors, and could not agree as to the disposition of their property; so one took away a clean half of the palace—leaving even half a column as the finish of the façade—and carted off every stone to Hungary, where he set up his morose stone tent, and probably rejoiced at the will and wisdom which had spoiled a house for one that two might be ill served.

Among all these palaces you come upon bits of the grandest architecture that it is possible to conceive—arches, windows, doors, loggias, balconies, each one of which is a poem written in stone and marble, not in words, and the beauty of which you are never tired of admiring. Go as often as you will, up and down this Grand Canal, you come always on something fresh, while the eagerness with which you turn to the loveliness already made known to you never abates. Whether it is the solidity of that magnificent pile which cost as much below the water as above, or the exquisite ogives and ornaments of the Casa d'Oro, there is ever a new sensation to be had, or a repetition of the old so vivid as to be equal to new. But with it all is a certain sadness in knowing that these splendid palaces are now put to base uses—some turned into hotels, some into flats and sets of apartments; here a 'dogana,' there a 'dazio,' here a 'Monte di pietà;' there a school or a museum, a shop or a manufactory.

It is not only on the Grand Canal that you may look your longest and your most loving. In the narrow winding side ways of stone or water—so narrow that one person can scarcely pass another, and two gondolas just scrape through without collision—in these dark side ways you come on most beautiful buildings; also in the wide deserted campi—the only piazza is that of St. Mark's, all the other squares are campi—there are churches and houses of surpassing beauty. But it seems almost a waste of good things to suddenly light on a loggia, a window, a balcony, a door, surrounded by quaint ornamentations, banded arches, and all the wealth of invention which can be hewn out in stone, set so high up, and in such narrow passages, that you cannot see them fairly save by craning your neck at the risk of dislocation. In the centre of that delicately wrought arch grins a demon, or sits more calmly a

beast, or beams down on you in blessing an angel or a saint; but no one can see it save those who live in the house immediately opposite, and they can almost pat its head. Few hunt out these odd bits of beauty; but how great they are when found! They add to the feeling of enchantment, of glamour, that steals over you as you float down these dark deserted water-ways—ways wherein you need no great stretch of imagination to picture any crime, any romance, possible to man. Not a human being is in sight; not a sound breaks the stillness save the plash of your own oars or the sharp cry of the gondolier—‘*preme*’ (to the right), ‘*stali*’ (to the left), or ‘*gia è*’ (a gondola comes), as he crosses or enters other canals than his own. And, accustomed as we are to believe that we are all kept in order only by the police, it seems strange to us that there should be both security and order here, where a Guardia is never seen on the water, and rarely in the streets, save at fixed points like the Piazza.

These gondoliers, by-the-by, are themselves worth studying, so graceful, lithe, and adept are they, standing on the poop at the stern and rowing forward with that sharp easy movement which has to be acquired in early youth if at all.

The churches are grand. San Georgio, lonely and deserted, standing on its own little island and looking in the evening light as if hewn out of pearl or opal, is one of the evidences of how different is the present from the past. Once one of the most thronged, the most favourite churches in Venice, it is now absolutely deserted, and the poor old patient monk who took us round told us that even on a festa only one woman and two or three boys came to attend the service which in olden times counted senators and patricians, gallant men and lovely ladies, as part of the ordinary congregation. What must it have been when it held its own particular festa on the anniversary of the Translation of the Body of Saint Stephen from Constantinople, and the Doge went in person to the church on the island called then ‘*dei Cipressi*’ (of the cypresses), and afterwards San Georgio! Now the sleepy water laps the old stone steps undisturbed by hurrying barques bearing reverent worshippers. The wealth of the monastery and the numbers of the monks have declined with the changes that have come into the times; and only four poor old souls sigh in humility and deadly dulness, where formerly the high-feeding, pleasure-loving, worldly Benedictines revelled, laughed and plotted, and prepared for their Order the decay which has fallen on them like the mildew which comes on fruit ripe to rottenness.

Sta. Maria della Salute, with its grand façade, and cupola like a giant bubble against the westering sun stands in memory of the

plague which stopped the public rejoicing for the happy peace made with the Austrians in 1630, when the Queen of the Adriatic recovered all that she had lost during the war. In thanksgiving for the cessation of the plague, this church to La Madonna della Salute was built, and held its own festa for ever after. Every kind of thing can be found in these churches. Pictures like the beautiful Sta. Barbara by Palma Vecchio and the Madonna and Child by Sasso Ferrata in Sta. Maria in Formosa: puerilities like the marble carpet by the high altar, neatly folded at the corners, and the changes wrought in the pattern by the fold accurately preserved, the pulpit drapery, tapestried walls and pillars, all still in marble inlaid, of I. Gesuiti; the marble door half open as a pleasant trap for the unwary, and the marble cushions and pew-hangings of Gli Scalzi; the stained glass windows, like so much jewel-work, and the splendid proportions of San Giovanni e Paolo (Zannipolo in the soft Venetian tongue), and the carved wood and bronze reliefs of the burnt chapel of San Rosario—but alas! Titian's Martyrdom of St. Peter gone for ever!—tombs of false taste like those of Canova and Titian in the church of the Frari—you have everything; and find that these churches are in a certain sense cosmopolitan, giving food for every kind of taste, both bad and good together. But in almost all of them may be remarked these two facts—that the arches are not true, and the whole structure is out of the perpendicular. This is specially remarkable in Sta. Maria della Salute, where the cupola and the campanile diverge considerably, the lines which should be parallel forming an acute angle at the base.

And in all of them modern Italian religion shows its tasteless barbarisms, and does its best to ruin the beauty of what has been bequeathed to it by the horrible ugliness of what it creates. The finest works of the best painters are smoked black by the candles set full against them; a Titian of priceless value to the right is contrasted with a modern gaudy daub to the left, or by a cheap print of violent colours set into a common frame, and flanked by the dirty crumpled dusty artificial flowers of the 'almond' shaped bouquet—flowers more tawdry and battered than so many theatrical properties. In a glass case, protected as something specially valuable, is a hideous wooden doll decked in tinsel and satin, with another smaller doll in its arms, also decked in tinsel and satin. Bad artificial flowers surround these monstrosities of taste; lamps burn before them, and devout worshippers kneel in pious adoration; 'ex votos' are hung up to perpetuate the grateful memory of miracles wrought by the intervention of the great Goddess of Catholicism, and perhaps a dreadful bleeding Christ completes the collection. In the grandest masterpieces of

architectural poetry, in the noblest realisation of the finest visions, we come across these hideous manifestations fit only for the worship of Juggernaut or the South Sea Island gods—things without one quality to recommend them, being too hideous in taste to bear discussion, too mean in feeling to be dignified by the name of religious decoration, and too superstitious in object to take rank as wholesome sentiment, even if the frightful expression might be pardoned.

In the Palace of the Doges is none of this mongrel work—this tawdry debasement of taste. What remains here is grand and grave; and if incomplete, naturally, in the minor details of furniture-finish, is as perfect in the greater circumstances as it was when the Great Council sat and deliberated on the public policy of the State,—when the Council of Ten sifted those deliberations yet more narrowly,—and the selected Three gave the last word and modified or confirmed what had gone before. The place is no dead tomb of the past. It is alive still with historical facts, which a little imagination can restore as in the past. Standing on that grand staircase, *La Scala dei Giganti*, on the top step of which the Doge was crowned, you look round on the galleries; there where his family sat in exulting pride, and there where the scarlet-robed senators gathered, some disappointed in their own ambition, and some thinking how they could best utilise the new man for their private advancement; with the shouting multitude thronging the court below, where the huge bronze cisterns, wrought within and without, are now the meeting-place of a few laughing gossips filling their brass pots merrily. Banners, and music, and the fair faces of noble women, and the stately bearing of the proudest patricians whom the world has ever seen, with the quaintly-dressed crowd below; you see them all as Carpaccio and Bonifazio, Veronese and Tintoret, have left them, while you stand on the now deserted Staircase of the Giants, and re-create the past as you repeople the present. Then the pageant fades, and you see only the silent court where the pigeons bask in the sun, the blue sky overhead, and the glory of man's work standing out sharp and clear in the unclouded light. And then you go up the '*Scala d'Oro*,' which only those illustrious Venetians whose names were written in the Golden Book had the right to tread; and so to that grand Hall of the Great Council where the Three Hundred discussed and determined the destinies of nations.

It is another race of men, grander and more heroic than anything existing now, whose deeds are recorded in those magnificent pictures wherein Tintoret and Veronese put their best genius. Your breath comes fast as you look at them and realise those

great historical events whereby the destinies of the world were changed, and which perhaps have faded away into mere names in your mind. All round the wall runs a frieze of Doges; the most significant that black tablet which stands where Marino Falieri should have come, and which bears in gold letters the terrible legend: 'Hic est locus Marini Falethri, decapitati pro criminibus.' Sic transit gloria! From the Doge's palace, with all its pomp and glory of circumstance, its prestige and power, you go to the gloomy prisons connected with it by that mournful Bridge of Sighs which so many sorrowful feet have trodden, so many joyous lives have crossed to be quenched in blood and darkness for ever. Ruskin denies that any one ever trod the Bridge of Sighs whose fate deserves compassion; but unless it can be proved that humanity is nothing, and only renown deserves one's sympathy, we must still pity the misfortunes of those poor victims of State necessity and class oppression who left the sunlight for those cruel, dark, inhuman cells, whence they were taken only to the place of execution in the passage beyond—a light on the bridge the sole sign to the world outside that a human life had ceased to exist, and that the blood of another victim was mingling with the waters of the canal below. Grand as the life was then, we may be glad that we have come into another state of things—a state wherein humanity ranks before art, and equal justice before the maintenance of privilege—a state which allows of free thought and free expression, and where crime has the fair hearing and folly the patient discussion which was then denied to patriotism and the desire to help those who were oppressed.

We get odd glimpses of the life of those proud luxurious patricians from certain small circumstances in the pictures. Take that one by Bonifazio in the Academia, of Dives and Lazarus, where the strong masterful 'rich man,' holding one fair woman's hand, turns with loving eyes to another—where the minstrels kneel as they sing and play before the portly lord, and in their turn degrade the humanity that is below themselves by making the little negro boy attending them their living music-stand. The sweet thoughtful face of the Venetian lady listening to the music is an evidence of the moral and intellectual worth of the women of the day in which she lived—women who were content to be women and not bad copies of men, and who thought the glorification of their womanhood, by the perfectness to which they could bring all that was sweet and gracious and feminine, a better thing than its degradation in striving to be what Nature has denied them the power of being, while dishonouring all that she has laid on them to do.

The *Academia* is an inexhaustible subject; from the great picture of the Presentation of the Virgin by Titian, to the quaint representations of Carpaccio—of whom our own *Marks* is the modern impersonation—from Veronese's masterly 'Jesus in the House of Levi' to the pure colour and odd drawing of the old old school framed in those gorgeous diptychs and triptychs, like gothic windows. The pretty little girlish Virgin tripping up the steps, holding back her blue frock with her hand, is one of the sweetest bits ever put on canvas; as is the grand old woman with her basket of eggs in the foreground, one of the strongest, and the fair lady looking out of the window above, one of the most seductive. In Veronese's, too, how fine are those queer, dark, half animal faces of the *jongleurs*—one crouching in the corner with his hawk, and one standing erect with more assurance! And the burly, bluff, big man, like an old Roman emperor living on the canvas; the servants drinking the wine on the stairs; the people coming and passing and mingling with the guests; how every circumstance is full of life and valuable suggestiveness! as are also all of Gentile Bellini, which we may take as accurate representations of costume and condition, like Carpaccio.

But these things have been written of by abler pens than mine; and how fresh soever they may be to me, they are probably stale to half of my readers. They are not mobile, capable of many interpretations, and to be set in varied lights, as are the changing scenes of the streets; and, after all, the life of a place like Venice is as interesting as its art, and the present is as valuable as the past.

In the narrow streets you meet women as beautiful as any of those whose eyes smile down on you from the walls of the *Academia*. They have still the golden-red Venetian hair, which the painters of old delighted in so much, as did the women themselves; and when the sun shines on the multitudinous plaits which they sometimes wind round and round, it gives a colour of more supreme and living beauty than words can describe or pigments portray. Sometimes the women set an aureole of silver pins about their heads; and sometimes they take out all beauty and colour by the abominable powder which makes decent citizenesses look like so many *Mesdames Pas Grandechoses*, and *Madame Pas Grandechose* herself more revolting than need be. As they come clattering along the stone pavements, dragging their heel-less slippers at every step, you are almost sure to have some harmonies of colour that no one but themselves could combine. They are fond of saffron-coloured gowns, and of reds and blues and greens which the sea air fades into mellow changeful tints; they wear old-fashioned three-cornered

shawls of fine patterns and bold colours—though the Austrian flowered shawl, which once made the delight of artists, is now very rarely seen—and their whole appearance is picturesque and delightful. Also they are far away the most beautiful women that I have seen in Italy, save the Caprese and the Ischians, and those about the Gulfs of Naples and Salerno.

The men, too, are fine and lissome; and the children look out with their large eyes from under their curly tangled locks, like so many cherubs fitted with half-naked little bodies, or amorini pushed into dirty jackets—and singularly apt at thieving. Groups or groups of big-eyed beauty and unconscious grace are to be seen gathered round the cisterns in the campi—open thrice a day for all to draw water who will. The women carry their two brass pots slung over their shoulders, like an Arab shadoof; and the walk of these bare-footed creatures is superb, like the walk of those silent, swift, and stealthy Neapolitan contadine, who are at your back whispering in your ear, ‘*Datemmi un soldo—per carità,*’ before you know of their existence. Here in Venice too beggars ply their trade when the Guardie are not looking; and the old men and boys who hook your gondola to the steps are only beggars in the disguise of usefulness. In the Piazza they are thieves as well as beggars; and should you lay anything belonging to you out of your hand, and for a moment forget to watch it, you will find that it has vanished into space when you look for it again, and that some one has made himself richer by your loss. If you go in the evening to eat ices at Florian’s, watching Young Italy in his amusement and listening to the band in the midst, take care of the spoons. Beautiful soft-voiced ragged little thieves abound. They come creeping up to you with their bright eyes and winsome faces, made up into so much fictitious woe; pointing to their red ripe mouths to tell you that they are hungry; offering you matches for sale, or asking you for the end of your ices, your coffee, your cigar, your bibite, your cake. Give them what you will, but be wary and watchful. Hold on to the spoons while you do so; and take care of your pockets, your umbrella, your handkerchief—anything, in short, which they can steal. For what they can steal they will.

You see pretty pictures at times in the street, as that which we once came across. In the angle of a narrow way was a niche with a Madonna presiding over the passers-by. Fresh flowers were on the shrine; and just underneath three women had planted their chairs, and were sitting there working as if in a private little room of their own. It was quaint and pretty; but then one is always falling on quaint and pretty little scenes which carry one out of one’s own more enclosed western life. As when one sits out of doors on

the broad pavement before the hotel, and watches the stream of human life flowing backwards and forwards, as the labourers and sailors go home to their poor rooms by the Giardino, and the women and children come out for a little fresh air after nightfall.

But the most beautiful things of all are to be seen on the sea, or rather the canals and lagoons. For the sea proper, you must go to the Lido. Great painted saffron and crimson sails come out from the distance, looking in the sunlight like the wings of some gigantic tropical bird ; flowers and glittering ornaments hang at the mast-head or midway, just where the second slanting mast crosses ; the burning sunset turns all the sky to opal, all the churches to pearl, all the sea to gold and crimson ; every colour gains an intensity and purity like to nothing ever seen in northern climates. The distant mountains glow like lines of lapis lazuli washed with gold ; the islands are bowers of greenery springing from the bosom of the purple waters, where you may fancy are hidden all sweet secrets of art and poetry and love. The moon slowly brightens, and makes her path of silver across the lagoons ; the gondoliers congregate together and sing snatches of fervid love songs, or those of plaintive sorrow or passionate patriotism, and sometimes the grave sweet sonnets written by Tasso, and adopted as the heir-looms of the craft. The anchored vessels hang out their lights, and the gondolas shoot across the waters like fire-flies in the darkness. Everywhere you hear music and song, and the plash of the swift oars, and the hum of human voices ; everywhere you see the glorious outlines of stately buildings, silvered by the moonlight into the work of magicians who were greater than men ; everywhere you drink in the charm, the subtle intoxication, the glory of this beloved queen among the nations ; and when the night has fairly come, and the world has sunk to rest, you lay your head on the pillow with a smile—your last thought : ‘ I am in Venice, and to-morrow I shall see her beloved beauty again ! ’

An Imperial Pardon.

DURING a journey through some parts of Russia a few years ago, we engaged, in preference to the imperial post-chaise, a private conveyance for a considerable distance, the driver being a Jew—generally preferred in the East on account of their sobriety and general trustworthiness. On the road my companion became communicative, and entered into philosophic-religious discussion—a topic of frequent occurrence among these bilingual populations. After a somewhat desultory harangue, he suddenly became silent and sad, having just uttered the words: ‘If a Chassid goes astray, what does he become? A meschumed, *i.e.* an apostate.’—‘To what class of people do you allude?’ I inquired.—‘Well, it just entered my head, because we have to pass the house of one of them—I mean the “forced ones.”’—‘Forced!’ I thought of a religious sect. ‘Are they Christians or Jews?’—‘Neither the one nor the other,’ was the reply, ‘but simply “forced.” Oh, sir, it is a great misery and a great crime! Our children at least will not know anything of it, because new victims do not arise, and on the marriage of these parties rests a curse—they remain sterile! But what am I saying? It is rather a blessing—a mercy! Should such a terrible misery be perpetuated? These forced people are childless. Well, God knows best. I am a fool, a sinner to speak about it.’ No entreaty of mine would induce my Jewish companion to afford further information concerning this peculiar people. But before the end of our journey I heard unexpectedly more about this unfortunate class of Russian subjects. We travelled westward through the valley of the Dniester, a district but thinly peopled, and rested at an inn on the borders of an extensive forest.

Amidst the raillery going on in the principal room of this hostelry between guests of different nationalities, we had not heard the noise of wheels which slowly moved towards the house. It was a very poor conveyance, containing a small cask and a basket. The young hostess arose hastily, and, approaching the owner, said in a whisper, ‘What is it you want?’ A slight paleness overspread her countenance, and stranger still was the demeanour of my coachman. ‘Sir, sir!’ he exclaimed loudly, turning towards me, stretching out his hands as if seeking support, or warding off some impending danger. ‘What is the matter?’ I rejoined

greatly surprised; but he merely shook his head, and stared at the new comer.

He was an elderly peasant, attired in the usual garb of the country-people; only at a more close inspection I noticed that he wore a fine white shirt. Of his face I could see but little, it being hidden behind the broad brim of his straw hat.

'Hostess,' he said, addressing the young woman, 'will you purchase something of me? I have some old brandy, wooden spoons and plates, pepper-boxes, needle-cases, &c., all made of good hard wood, and very cheap.' In an almost supplicating tone he uttered these words very slowly, with downcast eyes. From his pronunciation he appeared to be a Pole.

The hostess looked shyly up to him.

'You know my brother-in-law has forbidden me to have dealings with you,' she said hesitatingly, 'on account of your wife; but to-day he is not at home.' After a momentary silence, turning towards the driver, she continued, 'Reh Rüssan, will you betray me? You come frequently this way.' In reply he merely shrugged his shoulders and moved away. Turning again with some impatience to the peasant, she said, 'Bring me a dish and two spoons.' When he had gone to fetch these articles, the woman once more accosted my coachman.

'You must not blame me; they are very poor people!'

'Certainly they are very poor'—he replied in a milder tone. 'During life, hunger and misery, and after death—hell! and all undeserved!' But the man stood already, at this utterance, with his basket in the room. The bargain was soon concluded, and the few copeks paid. Curiosity prompted me to step forward and examine the merchandise.

'I have also cigar-cases,' said the peasant, humbly raising his hat. But his face was far more interesting than his wares. You rarely see such features! However great the misery on earth, this pale, pain-stricken countenance was unique in its kind, revealing yet traces of sullen defiance, and the glance of his eyes moved instantly the heart of the beholder—a weary, almost fixed gaze, and yet full of passionate mourning.

'You are a Pole!' I observed after a pause.

'Yes,' he replied.

And do you live in this neighbourhood?'

'At the inn eight werst from here. I am the keeper.'

'And besides wood-carver?'

'We must do the best we can,' was his reply. 'We have but rarely any guests at our house.'

"Does your hostelry lie outside the main road?'

‘No, close to the high road, sir. It was at one time the best inn between the Bug and the Dniester. But now carriers do not like to stay at our house.’

‘And why not?’

‘Because they consider it a sin—especially the Jews.’ Suddenly, with seeming uneasiness and haste, he asked, ‘Will you purchase anything? This box, perhaps. Upon the lid is engraved a fine country-house.’

Attracted by the delicate execution, I inquired, ‘And is this your own workmanship?’

‘Yes,’ was his reply.

‘You are an artist! And pray where did you learn wood engraving?’

‘At Kamieniec-Podski.’

‘At the fortress?’

‘Yes, during the insurrection of 1863.’

‘Were you among the insurgents?’

‘No, but the authorities feared I might join them—hence and the other forced ones were incarcerated in the fortress when the insurrection broke out, and again set free when it was suppressed.’

‘Without any cause?’

‘Without the slightest. I was already at that time a crushed man. When yet a youth the marrow of my bones had been poisoned in the mines of Siberia. During the whole time of my settlement, I have been since 1858 keeper of that inn; I gave the authorities no cause for suspicion, but I was a “forced man,” and that sufficed for pouncing upon me.’

‘Forced! what does it mean?’

‘Well, a person forced to accept, when to others free choice is left—domicile, trade or calling, wife, and religion.’

‘Terrible!’ I exclaimed. ‘And you submitted?’ A little smile played around his thin lips.

‘Are you so much moved at my fate? We generally bear very easily the most severe pains endured by others.’

‘That is a saying of Larochevoucauld,’ I said, somewhat surprised. ‘Have you read him?’

‘I was at one time very fond of French literature. But pardon my acrimony. I am but little accustomed to sympathy, and indeed of what avail would it be to me now!’ He stared painfully at the ground, and I also became silent, convinced that any superficial expression of sympathy would, under the circumstances, be downright mockery.

A painful pause ensued, which I broke with the question, if he

had worked the engraving upon the lid of the box after a pattern.

'No, from memory,' was his rejoinder.

'It is a peculiar kind of architecture!'

'It is like all gentlemen's houses in Littauen; only the old tree is very striking. It was a very old house.'

'Has been? Does it exist no longer?'

'It was burnt down seven years ago by the Russians, after they had first ransacked it. They evidently were not aware that they destroyed their own property. It had been confiscated years before, and had been Crown property since 1848.'

'And have you yet the outlines of that building so firmly engraved on your memory?'

'Of course! it was my birth-place, which I had rarely left until I was eighteen years old. Such things are not easily forgotten. And although more than twenty years have passed since this sad affair, hardly a day passed on which I did not think of my paternal home. I was aware of the death of my mother, and that my cousin was worse than dead—perhaps I ought to have rejoiced when the old mansion was burnt to the ground; but yet I could not suppress a tear when the news reached me. There is hardly anything on earth which can now move me.' I record literally what the unfortunate man related. My Jewish coachman, not easily impressed, had during the conversation crept gradually nearer, and shook his head seriously and sorrowfully.

'Excuse me, Pani Walerian,' he interrupted: 'upon my honour, yours is a sad story!' He launched out into practical politics, and concluded thus:

'A Pole is not as clever as I am. If he (the Pole) was the equal of the Russian, well and good, fight it out; but the Russian is a hundred times stronger; therefore, Pani Walerian, why irritate him, why confront him?'

I could not help laughing at these remarks; but the poor 'forced one' remained unmoved; and only after some silence, he observed, turning towards me:

'I have never even confronted the Russians. I merely received the punishment of the criminal, without being one, or venturing my all in my people's cause. I was very young, when I was transported to Siberia—little more than nineteen years old. My father had died early. I managed our small property, and a cousin of mine, a pretty girl, sixteen years old, lived at our house. Indeed, I had no thoughts of politics. It is true I wore the national costume, perused our poets, especially Mickiewicz and Slowaski, and had on the wall of my bedroom a picture of Kosciuszko.'

For such kind of high treason even the Russian Government would not have crushed me in ordinary times—but it was the year 1848. “Nicolai Pawlowitch” had not sworn in vain that if the whole of Europe was in flames, no spark should arise in his empire—and by streams of blood and tears, he achieved his object. Wherever a young Polish noble lived who was suspected of revolutionary tendencies, repeated domiciliary searches were made; and if only a single prohibited book was found, the dread fiat went forth, “To Siberia with him!”

‘In my own case it came like a thunderbolt. I was already in Siberia, and could not yet realise my misery. During the whole long journey I was more or less delirious. I hoped for a speedy liberation, for I was altogether innocent, and at that time,’ he continued with a bitter smile, ‘I yet believed in God. When all hope became extinct, I began madly to rave, but finally settled down utterly crushed and callous. It was a fearful state—for weeks together, all my past life seemed a complete blank, at most I still remembered my name. This, sir, is literally true: Siberia is a very peculiar place.’

The poor fellow had sunk down upon a bench, his hands rested powerless in his lap. I never have seen a face so utterly worn and pain-stricken. After a while he continued:

‘Ten years had thus passed away; at least, I was told so—I had long ceased to count the days of my misery. For what purpose should I have done so?

‘I had sunk so low that I felt no pity even for my terrible condition. One day I was brought before the Inspector, together with some of my companions. This official informed us that we had been pardoned on condition of becoming colonists in New Russia. The mercy of the Czar would assign to each of us a place of residence, a trade, and a lawful wife, who would be also pardoned convict. We must of course, in addition, be converted the Orthodox Greek Church. This latter stipulation did but little concern us. We readily accepted the conditions, for people are glad of leaving Siberia, no matter whither, even to meet death itself. And had we not been pardoned? Alexander Nikolajewitch is a gracious lord. In Siberia the mines are over-crowded, and in South Russia the steppes are empty! Oh, he is a philanthropist! *decus et deliciae generis humani*! But perhaps I wrong him. We entered upon our long journey, and proceeded slowly south-west. In about eight months we reached Mohilew. Here we were only kept in easy confinement, and above all brought under the influence of the pope. This was a rapid proceeding. One morning we were driven together into a room, about one hundred men, and an equal painful pause

number of women. Presently the priest entered; a powerful and dirty fellow, who appeared to have invigorated himself for his holy work with a considerable dose of gin, for we could smell it at least ten paces off, and he had some difficulty in keeping upon his legs.

“You ragamuffins!” he stammered; “you vermin of humanity! you are to become Orthodox Christians; but surely I shall not take much trouble with you. For, what do you think I get per head? Ten copeks, you vermin! ten copeks per head. Who will be a missionary at such pay? I certainly do it to-day for the last time! Indeed, our good father Alexander Nikolajewitch caused one rouble to be set in the tariff; but that rascal, the director, pockets ninety copeks, and leaves only ten for me. To-day, however, I have undertaken your conversion, because I am told there are many of you. Now listen! you are now Catholics, Protestants, Jews! That is a sad mistake; for every Jew is a blood-sucker, every Protestant a dog, and every Catholic a pig. Such is their lot in life—but after death? carrion, my good people, carrion! And will Christ have mercy on them at the last day? Verily, no! He will not dream of such a thing! And until then? Hell-fire! Therefore, good people, why should you suffer such torments? Be converted! Those who agree to become Orthodox Christians, keep silent; those who demur, receive the knout and go back to Siberia. Wherefore, my dear brothers and sisters, I ask, will you become Orthodox Christians?”

‘We remained silent.

“Well,” continued the pope, “now pay attention! Those who are already Christians need only to lift up the right hand, and repeat after me the creed. That will soon be done. But with the damned Jews one has always a special trouble—the Jews I must first baptise. Jews, step forward!—the other vermin can remain where they now are.” In this solemn manner the ceremony was brought to a conclusion.

‘On the day following,’ M. Walerian continued, ‘the second act was performed: the selection of a trade. This act was as spontaneous as our religious conversion; only, some individual regard became here indispensable. Three young Government officials were deputed to record our wishes, and to comply with them as far as the exigencies of the case admitted. The official before whom I appeared was very juvenile. Though externally very polished, he was in reality a frightfully coarse and cruel youth, without a spark of human feeling, so far as we were concerned. We afforded him no small amount of merriment. This youth inquired carefully concerning our wishes, and invariably

ordered the very opposite. Among us was a noble lady from Poland, of very ancient lineage, very feeble and miserable, whose utter helplessness might well inspire the most callous heart with respect and compassion. The lady was too old to be married to one of the "forced ones," and was therefore asked to state what kind of occupation she desired. She entreated to be employed in some school for daughters of military officers, there being a demand for such service; but the young gentleman ordered her to go as laundress to the barracks at Mohilew! An aged Jew had been sent to Siberia for having smuggled prohibited books across the frontiers. He had been the owner of a printing establishment, and was well acquainted with the business. "Could he not be employed in one of the Imperial printing offices; and if possible," urged the aged man, "be permitted to reside in a place where few or no Jews lived?" He had under compulsion changed his religion; to which he was yet fervently attached, and trembled at the thought that his former co-religionists would none the less avoid him as an apostate. The young official noted down his request, and made him a police agent at Miaskowka, a small town in the government district of Podolien, almost exclusively inhabited by Jews. Another, a former schoolmaster, in the last stages of consumption, begged on his knees to be permitted to die quietly in some country village. "That is certainly a modest request!" observed this worthless youth; and sent him as a waiter to a hospital. Need I tell how I fared? Being misled, like the rest, by the hypocritical air and seeming concern of this rascal, I made known to him my desire to obtain the post of under-steward at some remote Crown estate, where I might have as little intercourse as possible with my fellow-men. And thus, sir, I became the keeper of the small inn on a much-frequented highway!

The unfortunate man arose suddenly, and paced the room in a state of great excitement.

'But now comes the best of all,' he exclaimed, with a desperate effort—'the last act, the choice of a wife.' Again an internal struggle overpowered the unhappy narrator—a sudden and heavy tear rolled down his care-worn cheek, evidently caused by the remembrance of this abominable transaction. 'It was a terrible ordeal,' he said. 'Sir, sir,' he continued after a momentary pause, 'since the sun has risen in our horizon, he has shone on many a cruel game which the mighty of the earth have played with the helpless, but a more abominable farce has hardly ever been enacted than the one I am now relating—the manner in which we unfortunate people were coupled together. In my youth I read how Carrier at Nantes murdered the Royalists; how he caused the

first best man to be tied with a rope to a woman, and carried down the Loire in a boat. In the middle of the river a trap-door was suddenly opened, and the unfortunate couple disappeared in the waves. But that monster was an angel compared with the officials of the Czar; and these republican marriages were a benevolent act in comparison with those we were forced to conclude. At Nantes, the victims were tied together for a mutual death; we for our mutual lives! . . . On a subsequent morning we were once more ushered into the room where our conversion had taken place. There were present about thirty men and an equal number of women. Together with the latter entered the official who had so considerably ordered our lot as regards a livelihood.

"*Ladies and gentlemen,*" he commenced with a nasal twang, "*his Majesty has graciously pardoned you, and desires to see you all happy. Now, the lonely man is seldom a happy man; and hence you are to marry. Every gentleman is free to select a partner, provided of course the lady accepts the choice. And in order that none of you gentlemen may be placed in the invidious position of having to select a partner unworthy of him, supreme benevolence has ordered that an adequate number of ladies, partly from penal settlements and partly from houses of correction, should be now offered you. As his Majesty's solicitude for your welfare has already assigned you an occupation, you may now follow unhesitatingly the promptings of your own hearts in the choice of a wife. Ladies and gentlemen, yours is the happy privilege to realise the dream of a purely socialistic marriage. Make, then, your selection without delay; and as 'all genuine love is instantaneous, sudden as a lightning flash, and soft as the breezes of spring'—to use the words of our poet Ler-montoff—I consider one hour sufficient. Bear also in mind that marriages are ratified in heaven, and trust implicitly to your own heart. I offer you beforehand, ladies and gentlemen, my congratulations."*

* After this address, the young rascal placed his watch in front of him on the table, sat down, and grinned maliciously at our helpless condition. The full measure of scorn implied in this speech but few of us entirely realised, for we were in truth a curious assembly. The most extravagant imagination could hardly picture more glaring contrasts! Side by side with the bestial Bessarabian herdsman, who in a fit of intoxication had slain the whole of his family, stood the highly cultivated professor from Wilna, whom the love of his country and of freedom had consigned to the mines of Siberia; the most desperate thief and shoplifter from Moscow, and the Polish nobleman, who at the height of his misfortunes

still regarded his honour as the most precious treasure, the ex-professor from Charkow, and the Cossac-robber from the Don; the forger from Odessa, &c. On my own right hand stood a thief and deserter from Lipkany, and on the left a Baschkire, who had been pardoned at the foot of the gallows, though he had once assisted in roasting alive a Jewish family in a village inn. A madly assorted medley of human beings! And the women! The dissolute female gladly released from the house of correction, because she still more depraved her already degraded companions, associated with the unfortunate Polish lady, whose pure mind had never been poisoned by a vulgar word, and whose quiet happiness had not been disturbed by any prospect of misfortune, until a single letter, or an act of charity to an exiled countryman, brought her into misery. Pressing against the young girl whose sole offence consisted in being the unfortunate offspring of a mother sent to Siberia, might be seen the infamous hag who had habitually decoyed young girls to ruin, in whose soul every spark of womanhood had long been extinguished. And these people were called upon to marry; and one hour was granted them in which to become acquainted and assorted! Sir, you will now perhaps comprehend my emotion in relating this shocking business!

‘I consider it the most shocking and at the same time the most curious outrage which has ever been committed.’ The ‘forced’ man paused, a deadly pallor suffused his countenance, and his agitation was great. The young hostess appeared perfectly stunned, whilst Reb Rüssan, the coachman, bent his head in evident compassion.

After a while M. Walerian continued in a calmer mood. ‘It must certainly have been an entertaining spectacle to notice the behaviour of this ill-assorted people at that trying hour. Even the barefaced monster on his raised dais betrayed a feverish excitement: he would suddenly jump from his chair, and again recline, playing the while nervously with his fingers. I am hardly able to describe the details, being not altogether unbiassed at this dreadful hour.

‘I only know we stood at first in two distinct groups, and for the first few moments after the official announcement, not a glance was exchanged between the two sexes, much less a word spoken. A deep silence reigned in the room, a death-like stillness, varied only by an occasional deep sigh, or a nervous movement. The minutes passed, certainly not many, but they seemed to me an eternity!

‘Suddenly a loud hoarse voice exclaimed, “Up, my lads! here are some very pretty mates!” We all recognised the notorious

thief from Moscow, a haggard withered fellow, with the ugliest face I ever beheld. He crossed over to the women, and examined in his way which would be the most desirable partner. Here he received an indignant push, and there an impudent alluring glance. Others, again—the better part—recoiled from the approach of the brute. He was followed by the Baschkire, who like a clumsy beast of prey drew nigh, muttering incoherently, “I will have a fat woman, the fattest among them.” From his approach even the ugliest and most impudent instinctively recoiled—this wooer was really too hideous, at best only suited to a monkey. The third in order who came forward was the Don-Cossac, a pretty slender youth. An impudent lass jauntily met him and fell on his neck; but he pushed her aside, and walked towards the girl who had murdered her child. The discarded female muttered some insulting words, and hung the next moment on my own neck. I shook her off, and she repeated the attempt with my neighbour, and again unsuccessfully.

“Her example became contagious: presently the more shameless of the women made an onslaught on the men. Ten minutes later the scene had changed. In the centre of the room stood a number of men and women engaged in eager negotiation—shouting and scolding. The parties who had already agreed retired to the window-niches, and here and there a man pulled an unfortunate woman, making desperate efforts to escape from him. The females who yet retained a spark of womanhood crept into a corner of the room; and in another recess were three of us—the ex-professor, Count S., and myself. We had instinctively come together, watching with painful emotion this frantic spectacle, not inclined to participate in it. To me at least the thought of selecting a wife here never occurred.

““Another half an hour at your disposal, ladies and gentlemen,” exclaimed our official tormentor; “twenty minutes—yet fifteen minutes!”

“I stood as if rooted to the ground, my knees trembled, my agitation increased, but I remained motionless. Indeed, as often as I heard the unpleasant voice of the official, the blood rushed to my head, but I advanced not one step. My excitement increased—profound disgust, bitter despair—the wildest indignation which perhaps ever pierced a poor human heart. “No,” I said; “I must assert the dignity of my manhood!” I was determined not to make the selection of a wife under the eyes of this man. Another impulse I could hardly suppress—viz. to throw myself upon this imperial delegate and *strangle him*. And if I finally abstained

from an act of violence, it was because I yet loved life, and wished not to end it on the gallows. Sir,' continued M. Walerian, 'the source of great misery on earth is this overpowering instinct of self-preservation; without it, I should be free this day from all my misery. Thus I stood, so to speak, at bay in my corner, using all my efforts to subdue the evil spirit within me. My looks most probably betrayed me—for when my eyes met those of the official, I noticed an involuntary shudder. A moment afterwards he regarded me with a sly and malignant glance. I turned aside and closed my eyes on this harassing scene.

"Yet five minutes, ladies and gentlemen! Those as yet undecided must speed themselves, and unburden their heart, or I shall be compelled by virtue of my office to tie them together. And although I shall do so conscientiously, and to the best of my knowledge, there is this risk—that you engage in a marriage of mere convenience, instead of one of free choice and inclination."

"Though my agitation reached its climax, I made no move. I considered myself an accomplice in this disgraceful outrage, if I within the allotted five minutes declared my heart and made a choice. But another thought flashed across my mind: "I may still be able to prevent the worst. Who knows with whom that rascal may couple me if I remain altogether passive? Choose for yourself!" I made a step forward—a mist seemed before my eyes—my heart beat wildly—I staggered, I sought figures in order to distinguish and recognise myself.

"Sir," exclaimed the narrator with a sudden yell, "what scenes did I see there! I am no coward, but I—I dare not venture to speak of it. Thus I moved forward; hardly two minutes passed, but days would not suffice to relate what passed during these terrible moments through my heart and brain. I noticed in a corner a fainting woman, a young and delicate creature. I learnt afterwards that she was an orphan child, born of a dissolute woman in a penal settlement. A coarse fellow with cunning eyes bent over her, endeavouring to raise her from the ground. I suddenly pounced upon the fellow, struck him a heavy blow, and carried the unconscious woman away as if a mere child. I determined to defend her to the last. But no rescue was attempted, though the forger shook his fists at me, but had seemingly not the courage to approach nearer. Gazing about him, another female embraced him, a repulsive woman. He looked at her somewhat abashed, but soon submitted to her caresses.

"Ladies and gentlemen! the allotted hour has passed," said the official. "I must beg the parties to come forward and make known

to me their choice. This may be repugnant to some of you, but my duties prescribe it. I especially request the gentlemen in yonder corner to advance"—pointing to myself and the forger. I clenched my fists involuntarily, but stepped forward with the fainting woman. "Cossacks, keep your 'Kantschu' in readiness," said the official to the guard which surrounded him. Turning first to me, he said: "And are you, sir, resolved to carry the woman you now hold in your arms, not only in this room, but through life?" I nodded assent. "And what have you to say, damsel?" The poor creature was as yet unconscious. "She is in a swoon," I replied. "In that case I am sorry," continued the official, "to have to refuse in his Majesty's name my consent to your union. In the interests of humanity, I require an audible yes from all parties. I have watched attentively the whole proceedings," continued the official—"not from mere curiosity, but partly as a duty, and partly out of pure sympathy—and I can assure you, sir, without disparagement to your claims, that the choice of the young lady you now hold in your arms fell not upon you, but upon the gentleman yonder," pointing to the forger. "It was probably the excess of happiness at this selection which caused her fainting. For you there is waiting an adequate recompense—that ripe, desirable beauty who now only reluctantly holds the arm of your rival. Therefore, changez, Messieurs!" "Scoundrel!" I exclaimed, and advanced to seize him. But ere I could lay hold of him, a fearful blow on my head stretched me stunned and bleeding to the ground. When I had somewhat recovered, our marriage procession was in progress of formation. The woman whom the official had assigned to me knelt at my side, bathing my head, endeavouring to revive me. "I like you," she observed, "and will treat you well." She raised me to my feet, placed her arm in mine, and pushed me in the ranks of the procession, which moved slowly towards the church. On our road a heavy hand seized me suddenly by the collar. "Brother," grunted a coarse voice in my ear, "your stout woman takes my fancy. Will you change with me? Mine is certainly less corpulent, but younger in years."

"It was the man behind me—the Baschkire. The female whom he dragged along was a lean, ugly, dark-complexioned woman, swooning or near a swoon. An expression of unutterable despair overspread her features, rendering them, if possible, yet more ugly. "A woman who can suffer so intensely as this one unquestionably does, cannot be without a heart—is not altogether depraved, no matter what cause brought her here." These reflections determined me. "She is preferable to the woman at my side. Done!" I whispered to the Baschkire. Just crossing the threshold of the

church, a momentary pause ensued, during which we effected the exchange; not without a murmur, however, on the part of my intended wife. But the Baschkire kept her quiet; and a closer inspection of her new partner seemed to satisfy her. The poor woman I led forward seemed hardly aware of the exchange, she was so entirely absorbed in her grief. We were married. The official only afterwards became aware of what had happened but could not now undo it. But I had to suffer for it—terrible was the punishment.'

Not another word was uttered by the unfortunate man. Quite overcome by the recital of his cruel fate, he suddenly arose and left the house.

On account of the approach of the Jewish Sabbath, my coachman urged on our journey. Half an hour later, we passed the lonely and desolate hostelry of poor M. Walerian, the exile of Siberia, who owed so much to imperial clemency.

F. A. S.

Two Modern Japanese Stories.

THE two stories which follow were circulated in the city of Yedo some years back, and show that the better educated classes of Japanese are keenly alive to the absurdity of the figure cut by their countrymen when they attempt to jump over five hundred years in five hundred days.

I. *A Regular Mess.*

SOME six years back lived in the beautiful village of Minoge an old lady who kept the big tea-house of the place known as the 'White Pine.' Minoge is situated at the base of the holy mountain Oyama, and during the months of August and September trade in Minoge was always brisk, on account of the influx of pilgrims from all parts of Japan, who came hither to perform the holy duty of ascending the mountain, and of paying their devoirs at the shrine of the Thunder-God, previous to making the grand pilgrimage of Fuji-Yama.

The old lady was well off, and her inn bore an unblemished reputation for possessing the prettiest serving-girls, the gayest guest-chambers, and the primest stewed eels—the dish *par excellence* of Japanese *gourmets*—of any hostelry in the country side. One of her daughters was married in Yedo, and a son was studying in one of the European colleges of that city; still she was as completely rustic and unacquainted with the march of affairs outside as if she had never heard of Yedo, much less of foreigners. At that time it was a very rare thing indeed for a foreigner to be seen in Minoge, and the stray artists and explorers who had wandered there were regarded much in the same way as would have been so many white elephants.

It caused, therefore, no little excitement in the village when, one fine autumn evening, the rumour came along that a foreigner was making his way towards the 'White Pine.' Every one tried to get a glimpse of him. The chubby-cheeked boys and girls at the school threw down their books and pens, and crowded to the door and windows; the bath-house was soon empty of its patrons and patronesses, who, red as lobsters with boiling water, with dishevelled locks and garments hastily bound round them, formed line outside; the very Yakunin, or mayor, sentenced a prisoner he was judging straight off, without bothering himself to inquire into

evidence, so as not to be balked of the sight, and every wine and barber's shop sent forth its quota of starers into the little street.

Meanwhile the foreigner was leisurely striding along. He was taller by far than the tallest man in Minoge, his hair was fair, and even his bronzed face and hands were fair compared to those of the natives. On the back of his head was a felt wide-awake, he wore a blue jacket and blue half trousers (*Anglicè*, knickerbockers), thick hose, and big boots. In his mouth was a pipe—being much shorter than Japanese smoking tubes—in his hand a stick, and on his back a satchel.

As he passed, one or two urchins, bolder than the rest, shouted out 'Tojin baka' ('Foreign beast') and instantly fled indoors, or behind their mothers' skirts; but the majority of the villagers simply stared, with an occasional interjection expressive of wonder at his height, fair hair, and costume.

At the door of the 'White Pine' he halted, unstrapped his bundle, took off his boots, and in very fair Japanese requested to be shown his room. The old lady, after a full ten minutes' posturing, complimenting, bowing, and scraping, ushered him into her best guest-chamber. 'For,' said she, 'being a foreigner, he must be rich, and wouldn't like ordinary pilgrim accommodation.' And she drew to the sliding screens, and went off to superintend his repast. Although nothing but the foreigner's boots were to be seen outside, a gaping crowd had collected, striving to peer through the cracks in the doors, and regarding the boots as if they were infernal machines. One, more enterprising than the rest, took a boot up, passed it to his neighbour, and in a short time it had circulated from hand to hand throughout the population of Minoge, and was even felt and pinched by the mayor himself, who replaced it with the reverence due to some religious emblem or relic.

Then the hostess served up her banquet—seaweed, sweets, raw 'tighe'—the salmon of Japan—in slices, garnished with turnips and horse-radish, egg soup with pork lumps floating in it, chicken delicately broiled, together with a steaming bottle of her choicest 'San Toku Shiu,' or wine of the Three Virtues (which keeps out the cold, appeases hunger, and induces sleep).

The foreigner made an excellent meal, eked out by his own white bread, and wine from a flask of pure silver, then, lighting his pipe, reclined at full length on the mats, talking to the old lady and her three damsels, O Hana, O Kiku, and O Riu (Miss Flower, Miss Chrysanthemum, and Miss Dragon). He was walking about the country simply for pleasure, he said—which astonished the women greatly—he had been away from Yokohama three weeks and was now on his road to the big mountain. The party were

soon screaming with laughter at his quaint remarks and at his occasional colloquial slips, and in a short time all were such good friends that the old lady begged him to display the contents of his satchel. 'Certainly,' said the stranger, pulling it towards him and opening it. A dirty flannel shirt or two didn't produce much impression—perhaps wares of a similar nature had been imported before into Minoge—nor did a hair-brush, tooth-brush, and comb; but when he pulled out a pistol, which was warranted to go off six times in as many seconds, and proceeded to exemplify the same in the air, popular excitement began to assert itself in a series of 'naruhodo's' ('really!'). Then he pulled out a portable kerosine lamp—(kerosine lamps are now as common in Japan as shrines by the road-side)—and the light it made, throwing entirely into the shade the native 'andon,' or oil wick, burning close by, raised the enthusiasm still higher. Lastly he showed a small box of medicines, 'certain cures,' said he, 'for every disease known amongst the sons of men.'

The old lady and the maids were enchanted, and matters ended, after much haggling and disputation, in the foreigner allowing them to keep the three articles for the very reasonable sum of fifty dollars—about fifteen pounds sterling—which was handed over to the foreigner, who called for his bedding and went fast asleep.

The first thing for the old lady to do the next day was to present herself and maids in full holiday costume with their recent purchases at the house of the mayor. The great man received them and their goods with the dignity befitting his rank, and promised that a public trial should be made of the pistol, lamp, and medicines, at an early date, in order to determine whether they were worthy to be adopted as institutions in the village.

Accordingly, by proclamation, at a fixed date and hour, all Minoge assembled in the open space facing the mayor's house, and the articles were brought forth. The pistol was first taken and loaded, as directed by the foreigner, by the boldest and strongest man in the village. The first shot was fired—it wounded a pack-horse, standing some twenty yards away, in the leg; he took fright and bolted with a heavy load of wine tubs down the street into the fields: the second shot went through a temple roof opposite, and shattered the head of the deity in the shrine: the third shot perforated the bamboo hat of a pilgrim; and it was decided not to test the remaining three barrels.

Then the lamp was brought forth: the wick was turned up full, and the village strong man applied a light. The blaze of light was glorious, and drew forth the acclamations of the crowd; but the wick had been turned up too high, the glass burst with a tremen-

dous report, the strong man dropped the lamp, the oil ignited, ran about and set fire to the matting. In ten minutes, however, the local fire brigade got the flames under, and the experiments proceeded.

The medicine packets were brought forth. The first was a grey powder. A man who had been lame from youth upwards was made to limp out. The powder mixed with water, according to directions, was given him. He hobbled away in frightful convulsions, and nearly injured his whole limb in so doing.

The second packet was then unsealed—it contained pills. A blind man was called out—six pills were rammed down his throat, and he was left wallowing in a ditch. The third packet, a small book containing sticking plaster, was then introduced. A burly peasant, victim to fearful toothache, was made to stand forth. The interior of his mouth was lined with the plaster, and when he attempted in his disgust to pull it off, away came his skin also.

The medicines were condemned *nem. con.*

The foreigner returned, asked how matters had gone, and was told in polite but firm terms that his machines were not suited to the people of Minoge. Whereupon he returned the fifty dollars to the old lady of the 'White Pine,' and went away laughing. Minoge subsided into its ordinary every-day groove of life, and it was not till some years after that the inhabitants became better used to pistols, lamps, and European medicines.

II. *Paddling his own Canoe.*

TAKEZAWA was the head of a large silk and rice house in Yedo. His father had been head, his grandfather had been head, his great-grandfather had been head: in fact, the date when the first of the name affixed his seal to the documents of the house was lost in the mists of antiquity. So, when foreigners were first allowed a foot-hold on the sacred soil of Japan, none were so jealous of their advance, none so ardent in their wishes to see the white barbarians ousted, as the members of the firm of Takezawa and Co.

But times changed. Up to the last, Takezawa held out against the introduction of foreign innovations in the mode and manner of conducting the affairs of the firm; other houses might employ foreign steamboat companies as carriers for their produce from port to port, might import foreign goods, and even go so far as to allow the better paid of their clerks to dress themselves as they liked in foreign costume; but Takezawa and Co. were patriotic Japanese merchants, and resolved to run on in the old groove of their ancestors.

But times still changed, and the great house, running on in its solid old-fashioned manner, found itself left in the lurch by younger and more enterprising firms. This would never do. So Takezawa consulted with his partners, patrons, clients, and friends, and after much wordy discussion, and much vehement opposition on the part of the old man, it was resolved to keep pace with the times, as much as possible, without absolutely overturning the old status of the house.

Well, Takezawa and Co. had still a very fair share of the export rice and silk business; but their slow, heavy-sterned junks were no match for the swift, foreign-built steamers employed by other firms; so, with a tremendous wince, and not without a side thought at 'Hara Kiri'—(the 'Happy Despatch')—Takezawa consented to the sale of all his junks, and the purchase with the proceeds of a big foreign steamer.

The steamer was bought—a fine three-masted, double-funnelled boat, complete with every appliance, newly engined, and manned by European officers and leading seamen. From the dock at Yokoska, where she was lying, a preliminary trip was made; and so smoothly did everything work, and so easily did everything seem to act, under the guidance of the Europeans, that Takezawa considered his own mariners perfectly competent to handle the vessel after an hour's experience on board. So the Europeans were discharged with six months' salaries—about six times as much as they would have received at home—and Takezawa fixed a day when the ship should be rechristened, and should make her trial trip under Japanese management.

It was a beautiful day in autumn—the most glorious period of the year in Japan—when Takezawa and a distinguished company assembled on board the steamer, to give her a new name, and to send her forth finally as a Japanese steamer. The ship looked brave enough as she lay in the dock—ports newly painted, brass-work shining, yards squared, and half buried in bunting. At the mizen floated the empire flag of Japan—a red sun on a white ground—and as Takezawa gazed fore and aft, and his eyes rested on brightness, cleanliness, and order everywhere, he wondered to himself how he could have been such a fool as to stand out so long against the possession of such a treasure, merely on the grounds of its not being Japanese. A fair daughter of one of his partners dashed a cup of 'sake' against the bows of the vessel, and the newly named 'Lightning Bird' dashed forward into the ocean. Her head was made straight for Yokohama (Takezawa had seen the Englishmen at the wheel manipulate her in that course on her trial trip, so he knew she couldn't go wrong). And straight she went. Every

one was delighted ; sweetmeats and wine were served round, whilst on the quarterdeck a troupe of the best 'Geyshas' or singing-girls in Yedo mingled their shrill voices and their guitar notes with the sound of the fresh morning breeze through the rigging.

The engines worked magnificently: coals were poured into the furnaces by the hundredweight, so as to keep a good uniform thick cloud of smoke coming from the funnels—if the smoke lacked intensity for a minute, Takezawa, fearful that something was wrong, bellowed forth orders for more coal to be heaped on, so that in a quarter of an hour's time the 'Lightning Bird' consumed as much fuel as would have served a P. and O. steamer for half a day. On she went, everybody pleased and smiling, everything taut and satisfactory. Straight ahead was Treaty Point—a bold bluff running out into the sea. The 'Lightning Bird' was bound for Yokohama—Yokohama lies well behind Treaty Point—but at the pace she was going it was very apparent that, unless a sudden and rapid turn to starboard was made, she would run, not into Yokohama, but into Treaty Point.

The singing and feasting proceeded merrily on deck, but Takezawa was uneasy and undecided on the bridge. The helm was put hard a-port, the brave vessel obeyed, and leapt on straight for the line of rocks at the foot of the Point, over which the waves were breaking in cascades of foam. But the gods would not see a vessel, making her first run under Japanese auspices, maltreated and destroyed by simple waves and rocks ; so, just in time to save an ignominious run aground, the helm was put hard over, fresh fuel was piled on to the furnaces, and by barely half a ship's length the 'Lightning Bird' shaved the Point, and stood in straight for Yokohama bay.

Takezawa breathed freely for the moment ; but, as he saw ahead the crowd of European ships and native junks through which he would have to thread his way, he would have given a very large sum to have had a couple of Europeans at the wheel in the place of his own half-witted, scared mariners.

However, there was no help for it; the ship sped on, and the guests on board, many of whom were thorough rustics, were in raptures at the distant views of the white houses on the Yokohama Bund, at the big steamers and the graceful sailing vessels on all sides. To avoid the chance of a collision, Takezawa managed to keep his steamer well outside ; they nearly ran down a fishing junk or two, and all but sunk the lightship ; still, they had not as yet come to absolute grief. Round they went for a long half-hour ; many of the guests were suffering from sickness, and Takezawa thought that he might bring the trip to an end. So he bellowed forth

orders to stop the engines, and anchor. The anchor was promptly let go, but stopping the engines was another matter, for nobody on board knew how to do so—there was nothing to be done but to allow the vessel to pursue a circular course until steam was exhausted, and she could go no farther. It was idle to explain to the distinguished company that this was the course invariably adopted by Europeans, for under their noses was the graceful P. and O. steamer, a moment since ploughing along at full steam, now riding at anchor by her buoy. So round and round went the 'Lightning Bird,' to the amazement of the crews of the ships in harbour and of a large crowd gathered on the 'Bund'; the brave company on board were now assured that the judgment of the gods was overtaking them for having ventured to sea in a foreign vessel, and poor Takezawa was half resolved to despatch himself, and wholly resolved never to make such an experiment as this again. He cursed the day when he was finally led to forsake the groove so honourably and profitably grubbed along by his fathers, and strode with hasty steps up and down the bridge, refusing to be comforted, and terrifying out of their few remaining wits the two poor fellows at the wheel. After a few circles, an English man-of-war sent a steam launch after the 'Lightning Bird,' and to the intense disgust of the great Japanese people on board, who preferred to see eccentricity on the part of their countrymen, to interference by foreigners, but to the great delight of the women and rustics, who began to be rather tired of the fun, the engines were stopped. Takezawa did not hear the last of this for a long, long time; caricatures and verses were constantly being circulated bearing upon the fiasco, although it would have been as much as any man's life was worth to have taunted him openly with it. But it was a salutary lesson; and although he still kept the 'Lightning Bird,' he engaged Europeans to man her, until his men proved themselves adepts, and she afterwards became one of the smartest and fastest craft on the coast.

The Homes and Haunts of the Italian Poets.

VIII.—GUARINI.

BY T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE.

PASTORAL poetry had in Italy a tendency to rapid degeneration from the first. 'Decipit exemplum vitiis imitabile.' The earliest 'pastorals' were far from being without merit, and merit of a high order. But they were eminently 'vitiis imitabiles.' Two specimens of Italian Arcadian poetry stand out, from the incredibly huge mass of such productions still extant, superior to all the innumerable imitations to which they gave rise in a more marked degree even than 'originals' usually surpass imitations in value. These are the 'Aminta' of Tasso, and the 'Pastor Fido' of the poet with whom it is the object of these pages to make the English nineteenth century reader, who never will find the time to read him, in some degree acquainted—Batista Guarini. It would be difficult to say which of these two celebrated pastoral dramas was received with the greater amount of delight and enthusiasm by the world of their contemporaries, or even which of them is the better performance. The almost simultaneous production of these two masterpieces in their kind is a striking instance of the, one may almost say, epidemic nature of the influences which rule the production of the human intellect; influences which certainly did not cease to operate for many generations after that of the authors of the 'Aminta' and the 'Pastor Fido,' although the servile imitation of those greatly admired works unquestionably went for much in causing the overwhelming flood of pastorals which deluged Italy immediately subsequent to their enormous success.

I have said that it would be difficult to assign a preëminence to either of these poems. But it must not be supposed that it is intended thence to insinuate an equality between the authors of them. Tasso would occupy no lower place on the Italian Parnassus if he had never written the 'Aminta.' His fame rests upon a very much larger and firmer basis. But Guarini would be nowhere—would not be heard of at all—had he not written the 'Pastor Fido.' Having, however, produced that work—a work of which forty editions are said to have been printed in his lifetime, and which has been translated into almost every civilised language, including Latin, Greek, and Hebrew—he has always filled a space in the eyes of his countrymen, and occupied a position in the roll of fame,

which render his admission as one of our select band here imperative. He is, besides, a representative poet; the head and captain of the pastoral school, which attained everywhere so considerable a vogue, and in Italy such colossal proportions.

Guarini was born in the year 1537 in Ferrara,—desolate, dreary, shrunken, grass-grown, tumble-down Ferrara, which in the course of one half-century gave to the world, besides a host of lesser names, three such poets as Tasso, Ariosto, and Guarini. Ariosto died four years before Guarini was born; but Tasso was nearly his contemporary, being but seven years his junior.

In very few cases in all the world and in all ages has it happened that intellectual distinction has been the appanage of one family for as many generations as in that of the Guarini. They came originally from Verona, where Guarino, the first of the family on record, who was born in 1370, taught the learned languages, and was one of the most notable of the band of scholars who laboured at the restoration of classical literature. He lived to be ninety years old, and is recorded to have had twenty-three sons. It is certain that he had twelve living in 1438. One of them, Giovanni Batista, succeeded his father in his professorship at Ferrara, to which city the old scholar had been invited by Duke Hercules I. It would seem that another of his sons must also have shared the work of teaching in the University of Ferrara; for Batista the poet was educated by his great-uncle Alessandro, and succeeded him in his professorship. Of the poet's father we only learn that he was a mighty hunter, and further, that he and his poet-son were engaged in litigation respecting the inheritance of the poet's grandfather and great-uncle. It is probable that the two old scholars wished to bequeath their property, which included a landed estate, to their grandson and great-nephew, who already was manifesting tastes and capacities quite in accordance with their own, rather than to that exceptional member of the race who cared for nothing but dogs and horses.

Nor was Batista the last of his race who distinguished himself in the same career. His son succeeded him in his chair at the university; and we have thus at least four generations of scholars and professors following the same course in the same university, which was in their day one of the most renowned in Europe.

All this sounds very stable, very prosperous, very full of the element of contentment. And there is every reason to believe that the great-grandfather, the grandfather, the great-uncle, the son, were all as tranquil and contented and happy as well-to-do scholars in a prosperous university city should be. But not so the

poet. His life was anything but tranquil, or happy, or contented. The lives of few men, it may be hoped, have been less so.

Yet his morning was brilliant enough. He distinguished himself so remarkably by his success in his early studies that, on the death of his great-uncle Alexander when he was only nineteen, he was appointed to succeed him. This was in 1556, when Hercules II. was Duke of Ferrara, and when that court of the Este princes was at the apogee of its splendour, renown, and magnificence. The young professor remained working at the proper labours of his profession for ten years; and they were in all probability the best and happiest, the only happy ones of his life. Happy is the nation, it has been said, which has no history; and much the same probably may be said of an individual. Respecting these ten years of Guarini's life but little has been recorded. No doubt the chronicle of them would have been monotonous enough. The same quiet duties quietly and successfully discharged; the same morning walk to his school, the same evening return from it, through the same streets, with salutations to the same friends, and leisurely pauses by the way to chat, Italian fashion, with one and another, as they were met in the streets, not then, as now, deserted, grass-grown, and almost weird in their pale sun-baked desolation, but thronged with bustling citizens, mingled with gay courtiers, and a very unusually large proportion of men whose names were known from one end of Italy to the other. Those school haunts in the Ferrarese University were haunts which the world-weary ex-professor must often throughout the years of his remaining life—some forty-five of them, for he did not die till 1612, when he was seventy-five—have looked back on as the best and happiest of his storm-tossed existence.

There is, however, one record belonging to this happy time which must not be forgotten. It was at Padua, *Padova la dotta*, as she has been in all ages and is still called, Padua the learned, in the year 1565. Guarini was then in his twenty-eighth year, and had been a professor at Ferrara for the last eight years. Probably it was due to the circumstance that his friend and fellow-townsmen, Torquato Tasso, was then pursuing his studies at Padua, that the young Ferrarese professor turned his steps in that direction, bound 'on a long vacation ramble.' Tasso was only one-and-twenty at the time; but he was already a member of the famous Paduan Academy of the 'Etherials,' which Guarini was not. And we may readily fancy the pride and pleasure with which the younger man, doing the honours of the place to his learned friend, procured him to be elected a member of the 'Etherials.' Guarini (*so called nel secolo*—in the world), was *Il Costante*—the

Constant One' among the 'Etherials.' Scipio Gonzaga, who became subsequently the famous Cardinal, spoke an oration of welcome to him on his election. Then what congratulations, what anticipations of fame, what loving protestations of eternal friendship, what naïve acceptance of the importance and serious value of their Etherial Academic play, as the two youths strolling at the evening hour among the crowds of gravely clad but in no wise gravely speaking students who thronged the colonnades in deep shadow under their low-browed arches, sally forth from beneath them as the sun nears the west, on to the vast open space which lies around the great church of St. Antony! Advancing in close talk they come up to Donatello's superb equestrian statue of the Venetian General Gattamelata, and lean awhile against the tall pedestal, finishing their chat before entering the church for the evening prayer.

The 'Etherials' of Padua constituted one of the innumerable 'Academies' which existed at that day and for a couple of centuries subsequently in every one of the hundred cities of Italy. The 'Arcadian' craze was the generating cause of all of them. All the members were 'shepherds'; all assumed a fancy name on becoming a member, by which they were known in literary circles; and every Academy printed all the rhymes its members strung together!

Those must have been pleasant days in old Padua, before the young Professor returned to his work in the neighbouring university of Ferrara. The two young men were then, and for some time afterwards, loving friends; for they had not yet become rival poets.

At the end of those ten years of university life he may be said to have entered on a new existence—to have begun life afresh—so entirely dis severed was his old life from the new that then opened on him. Alphonso II., who had succeeded his father, Hercules II., as Duke of Ferrara in 1559, 'called him to the court' in 1567, and he began life as a courtier, or a 'servant' of the Duke, in the language of the country and time.

Well, in 1567 he entered into the service of the Duke, his sovereign, and never had another happy or contented hour!

The first service on which the Duke employed him, and for the performance of which he seems specially to have taken him from his professional chair, was an embassy to Venice, to congratulate the new Doge, Pietro Loredano, on his elevation to the ducal throne, to which he had been elected on the previous 19th of June. On this occasion the Professor was created Cavaliere, a title to which his landed estate of Guarina, so called from the ancestor on

whom it had been originally bestowed by a former duke, fairly entitled him.

Shortly afterwards he was sent as ambassador to the court of Turin; and then to that of the Emperor Maximilian at Innsbruck. Then he was twice sent to Poland; the first time on the occasion of the election of Henry the Third of France to the throne of that kingdom; and the second time when Henry quitted it to ascend that of France on the death of his brother Charles IX. The object of this second embassy was to intrigue for the election to the Polish crown of Alphonso. But, as it is hardly necessary to say, his mission was unsuccessful.

It seems, too, to have been well-nigh fatal to the ambassador. There is extant a letter written from Warsaw to his wife, which gives a curious and interesting account of the sufferings he endured on the journey and at the place of his destination. He tells his wife not to be discontented that his silence has been so long, but to be thankful that it was not eternal, as it was very near being so! 'I started, as you know, more in the fashion of a courier than of an ambassador. And that would have been more tolerable if bodily fatigue had been all. But the same hand that had to flog the horses by day, had to hold the pen by night. Nature could not bear up against this double labour of body and mind; especially after I had travelled by Serravelles and Ampez,¹ which is more disagreeable and difficult than I can tell you, from the ruggedness no less of the country than of the people, from the scarcity of horses, the miserable mode of living, and the want of every necessary. So much so that on reaching Hala² I had a violent fever. I embarked, however, for Vienna notwithstanding. What with fever, discouragement, an intense thirst, scarcity of remedies and of medical assistance, bad lodging, generally far to seek,³ and often infected with disease, food disgusting, even to persons in health, bed where you are smothered in feathers, in a word, none of the necessities or comforts of life! I leave you to imagine what I have suffered. The evil increased; my strength grew less. I lost my appetite for everything save wine. In a word, little hope remained to me of life, and that little was odious to me. There is on the Danube, which I was navigating, a vast whirlpool, so rapid that if the boatmen did not avail themselves of the assistance of a great number of men belonging to the locality, strong and

¹ The now celebrated pass of the Ampezzo between Venice and Innsbruck.

² This must probably be Hall on the Inn, a little below Innsbruck. Certainly any boat which he got there for the descent of the river must have been a sufficiently miserable mode of travelling.

³ Far, that is, from the bank of the river, where he left his boat at night.

powerful and well acquainted with the danger, who are there constantly for the purpose, and who struggle with their oars against the rapacious gulf, there is not a vessel in that great river which would not be engulfed! The place is worthy of the name of "the Door of Death," which with a notoriety of evil fame it has gained for itself. There is no passenger so bold as not to pass that bit of the course of the river on foot; for the thing is truly formidable and terrible. But I was so overcome by illness, that having lost all sense of danger or desire to live, I did not care to leave the boat, but remained in it, with those strong men, I hardly know whether to say stupidly or intrepidly—but I will say intrepidly, since at one point, where I was within an ace of destruction, I felt no fear.'

He goes on to tell how at Vienna a physician treated him amiss, and made him worse; how every kind of consideration, and his own desire to save his life, counselled him to delay there; but how the honour, the responsibility of the embassy wholly on his shoulders, his duty to his sovereign prevailed to drive him onwards. He feared, too, lest it should be supposed at Warsaw that he preferred his life to the business on which he came, an accusation which might have been made use of by suspicious and malignant adversaries to deprive him of all the credit of his labours, and 'to snatch from my Prince the crown which we are striving to place on his head. It is impossible to imagine,' he continues, 'what I suffered in that journey of more than six hundred miles from Vienna to Warsaw, dragged rather than carried in carts, broken and knocked to pieces. I wonder that I am still alive! The obstinate fever, the want of rest, of food, and of medicine, the excessive cold, the infinite hardships, the uninhabited deserts, were killing me. More often than not it was a much lesser evil to crouch by night in the cart, which dislocated my bones by day, rather than to be suffocated in the foulness of those dens, or stables rather, where the dogs and the cats, the cocks and hens, and the geese, the pigs and the calves, and sometimes the children, kept me waking.'

He proceeds to tell how the country was overrun, in that time of interregnum, by lawless bands of Cossacks; how he was obliged to travel with a strong escort, but nevertheless was obliged several times to deviate from the direct road to avoid the Cossacks, but on two occasions had very narrow escapes from falling into their hands. When he reached Warsaw at last, more dead than alive, the only improvement of his position was that he was stationary instead of in motion. 'The cart no more lacerates my limbs!' But there was no rest to be got. 'The place, the season, the food,

the drink, the water, the servants, the medicines, the doctors, mental trouble, and a thousand other ills make up my torment. Figure to yourself all the kingdom lodged in one little town, and my room in the midst of it! There is no place from the top to the bottom, on the right or on the left, by day or by night, that is not full of tumult and noise. There is no special time here destined for business. Negotiation is going on always, because drinking is going on always; and business is dry work without wine. When business is over, visits begin; and when these are at an end, drums, trumpets, bombs, uproar, cries, quarrels, fighting, split one's head in a manner piteous to think of. Ah! if I suffered all this labour and this torment for the love and the glory of God, I should be a martyr!' (one thinks of Wolsey!) 'But is he not worthy of the name who serves without hope of recompense?'

He concludes his letter, bidding his wife not to weep for him but to live and care for her children, in a manner which indicates that he had even then but little hope of returning alive.

We are nevertheless assured by his biographers that he acquitted himself upon all these occasions in such sort as to give satisfaction to his sovereign and to acquire for himself the reputation of an upright and able minister. The Italian practice of entrusting embassies especially to men of letters, which we first had occasion to note when tracing the vicissitudes of the life of Dante in the thirteenth century, which we saw subsequently exemplified in the cases of Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Ariosto, and which might be further exemplified in the persons of many other Italian scholars and men of letters, still, as we see, prevailed in the sixteenth century, and continued to do so for some little time longer.

But in no one instance of all those I have mentioned, does the poet thus employed in functions which in other lands and other times have usually led to honours and abundant recognition of a more solid kind, appear to have reaped any advantage in return for the service performed, or to have been otherwise than dissatisfied and discontented with the treatment accorded to him.

It would have been very interesting to learn somewhat of the impression made upon an Italian scholar of the sixteenth century by the places visited, and persons with whom he must have come in contact in those transalpine lands, which were then so far off, so contrasted in all respects with the home scenes among which his life had been passed in the low-lying, fat, and fertile valley of the Po. Of all this his various biographers and contemporaries tell us no word! But there is a volume of his *letters*, a little square quarto volume, now somewhat rare, printed

at Venice in the year 1595.¹ These letters have somewhat unaccountably not been included in any of the editions of his works, and they are but little known. But turning to this little volume, and looking over the dates of the letters (many of them, however, are undated), I found three written 'Di Spruch,' and eagerly turned to them, thinking that I should certainly find there what I was seeking. The letters belong to a later period of Guarini's life, having been written in 1592, when he was again sent on an embassy to the German Emperor. This circumstance, however, is of no importance as regards the purpose for which I wanted the letters. I was disappointed. But I must nevertheless give one of these letters, not wantonly to compel my reader to share my disappointment, but because it is a curiosity in its way. The person to whom he writes is a lady, the Contessa Pia di Sala, with whom he was evidently intimate. He is at Innsbruck at the Court of the Emperor Maximilian. The lady is at Mantua, and this is what he writes to her :

' Di Spruch, Nov. 29, 1592.

'The letter of your Illustrious Ladyship, together with which you send me that of your most excellent brother, written at the end of August, reached me yesterday, at first to my very great anger at having been for so long a time deprived of so precious a thing, while I appeared in fault towards so distinguished a lady; but finally to my very great good fortune. For if a letter written by the most lovely flame² in the world had arrived, while the skies were burning, what would have become of me, when, now that winter is beginning, I can scarcely prevent myself from falling into ashes? And in truth, when I think that those so courteous thoughts come from the mind which informs so lovely a person, that those characters have been traced by a hand of such excellent beauty, I am all ablaze, no less than if the paper were fire, the words flames, and all the syllables sparks. But God grant that, while I am set on fire by the letter of your Illustrious Ladyship, you may not be inflamed by anger against me, from thinking that the terms in which I write are too bold. Have no such doubt, my honoured mistress! I want nothing from the flaming of my letter, but to have made by the light of it more vivid and more brilliant in you, the natural purity of your beautiful face, even as it seems to me that I can see it at this distance. My love is nothing else save honour; my flame is reverence; my fire is ardent desire to serve you. And only so long will the appointment in his service, which it has pleased my Lord His Serene Highness the Duke of Mantua to give me, and on which your Illustrious Ladyship has been kind enough to congratulate me so cordially, be dear to me, as you shall know that I am fit for it, and more worthy and more ready to receive the favour of your commands, which will always be to me a most sure testimony that you

¹ Lettere del Signor Cavaliere Battista Guarini, Nobile Ferrarese, di nuovo in questa seconda impressione di alcune altre accresciute, e dall' Autore stesso corrette, di Agostino Michele raccolte, et al Sereniss. Signore il Duca d'Urbino dedicate. Con Privilegio. In Venetia, mxcv. Appresso Gio. Battista Ciotti Senese al segno della Minerva.

² I translate literally. Old-fashioned people will remember a somewhat similar use of the word 'Flame' in English.

esteem me, not for my own worth, as you too courteously say, but for the worth which you confer on me, since I am not worthy of such esteem for any other merit than that which comes to me from being honoured by so noble and beautiful a lady. I kiss the hand of your Illustrious Ladyship, wishing the culmination of every felicity.'

Now, this letter I consider to be a very great curiosity! The other two written from the same place, one to a Signor Bulgarini at Siena, the other to a lady, the Marchesa di Grana, at Mantua, are of an entirely similar description. I turned to them in the hope of finding how Innsbruck, its stupendous scenery, its court, its manners so widely different from those to which the writer and his correspondents were used, its streets, its people, impressed a sixteenth century Italian from the valley of the Po. I find instead a psychological phenomenon! The writer is a grave, austere man (Guarini was notably such), celebrated throughout Italy for his intellectual attainments, in the fifty-seventh year of his age, with a wife and family; he is amidst scenes which must, one would have thought, have impressed in the very highest degree the imagination of a poet, and must, it might have been supposed, have interested those he was writing to in an only somewhat less degree, and he writes the stuff the reader has just waded through! It is clear that this Italian sixteenth century scholar, poet and of cultivated intellect as he was, saw nothing amid the strange scenes to which a hard and irksome duty called him, which he thought worthy of being mentioned even by a passing word to his friends! Surely this is a curious trait of national character.

He remained 'in the service of the court for fourteen years, employed mainly, as it should seem, in a variety of embassies; an employment which seems to have left him a disappointed, soured, and embittered man. He considered that he had not been remunerated as his labour deserved, that the heavy expenses to which he had been put in his long journeys had not been satisfactorily made up to him, and that he had not been treated in any of the foreign countries to which his embassies had carried him with the respect due to his own character and to his office.

He determined therefore to leave the court and retire to Padua, a residence in which city, it being not far distant from his estate of Guarina, would offer him, he thought, a convenient opportunity of overlooking his property and restoring order to his finances, which had suffered much during his travels. This was in the year 1582, when Guarini was in the forty-fifth year of his age. It is not clear, however, that this retirement was wholly spontaneous; and the probability is that the Duke and his ambassador were equally out of humour with each other. And it is probable that the faults were

not all on the side of the Duke. There is sufficient evidence that the author of the 'Pastor Fido' must have been a difficult man to live with.

The old friendship of happier days with Tasso had not survived the wear and tear of life at court. It was known that they no longer saw or spoke with each other. And everybody—if not of their contemporaries, at least of subsequent writers—jumped to the conclusion that the writer of the 'Aminta' and the writer of the 'Pastor Fido' must be jealous of each other. Jealousy there certainly was. But some frailer and more mortal female than the Muse was the cause of it. The Abate Serassi in his life of Tasso admits that Tasso first gave offence to Guarini by a sonnet in which he endeavoured to alienate the affections of a lady from him, by representing him as a faithless and fickle lover. The lines in which Tasso attacked his brother-poet are, it must be admitted, sharp enough!

Si muove e si raggira
Instabil più che arida fronde ai venti;
Nulla fè, null' amor, falsi i tormenti
Sono, e falso l'affetto ond' ei sospira.
Insidioso amante, ama e disprezza
Quasi in un punto, e trionfando spiega
Di femminile spoglie empì trofei.¹ . . .

The attack was savage enough, it must be admitted, and well calculated to leave a lasting wound. Guarini immediately answered the cruel sonnet by another, the comparative weakness of which is undeniable.

Questi che indarno ad alta mira aspira
Con altrui biasmi, e con bugiardi accenti,
Vedi come in se stesso arruota i denti,
Mentre contra ragion meco s' adira.

Di due fiamme si vanta, e stringe e spezza
Più volte un nodo; e con quest' arti piega
(Chi l'crederebbe!) a suo favore i Dei.² . . .

There is reason to think that the accusation of many times binding and loosing the same knot, may have hit home. The

¹ I subjoin a literal prose translation in preference to borrowing a rhymed one from any of Tasso's translators. This fellow 'flits and circles' around more unstable than dry leaves in the wind. Without faith, without love, false are his pretended torments, and false the affection which prompts his sighs. A traitorous lover, he loves and despises almost at the same moment, and in triumph displays the spoils of women as impious trophies.

² See how this fellow, who in vain aims at a lofty goal, by blaming others, and by lying accents, sharpens against himself his teeth, while without reason he is enraged with me. . . . Of two flames he boasts, and ties and breaks over and over again the same knot; and by these arts (who would believe it!) bends in his favour the Gods.

sneer about bending the gods to favour him, alludes to Tasso's favour at court, then in the ascendant, and may well have been as offensive to the Duke and the ladies of his court as to the object of his satire. Both angry poets show themselves somewhat earth-stained members of the Paduan 'Etherials.' But the sequel of the estrangement was all in favour of the greater bard. Tasso, in desiring a friend to show his poems in manuscript to certain friends, two or three in number, on whose opinion he set a high value, named Guarini among the number. And upon another occasion wishing to have Guarini's opinion as to the best of two proposed methods of terminating a sonnet, and not venturing to communicate directly with him, he employed a common friend to obtain his brother-poet's criticism. Tasso had also in his dialogue entitled the 'Messaggero' given public testimony to Guarini's high intellectual and civil merits. But Guarini appears never to have forgiven the offence. He never once went to see Tasso in his miserable confinement in the hospital of St. Anne; nor, as has been seen, would hold any communication with him.

He must have been a stern and unforgiving man. And indeed all the available testimony represents him as having been so,—upright, honest, and honourable, but haughty, punctilious, litigious, quick to take offence, slow to forget or forgive it, and cursed with a thin-skinned *amour propre* easily wounded and propense to credit others with the intention of wounding where no such intention existed. The remainder of the story of his life offers an almost unbroken series of testimonies to the truth of such an estimate of his character.

It was after fourteen years' service in the court of Duke Alphonso, as has been said, that he retired disgusted and weary to live in independence and nurse his estate in the neighbourhood of Padua. But the part of Cincinnatus is not for every man! It was in 1582 that he retired from the court intending to bid it and its splendours, its disappointments and its jealousies, an eternal adieu. In 1585, on an offer from the Duke to make him his secretary, he returned and put himself into harness again!

But this second attempt to submit himself to the service, to the caprices and exigencies of a master and of a court ended in a quicker and more damaging catastrophe than the first. In a diary kept by the poet's nephew, Marcantonio Guarini, under the date of July 13, 1587, we find it written that 'the Cavalier Batista Guarini, Secretary of the Duke, considering that his services did not meet with sufficient consideration in proportion to his worth, released himself from that servitude.' The phrase here translated 'released himself' is a peculiar one,—*si licenzio*—'dismissed

himself.' To receive *licenza*, or to be *licenziato*, is to be dismissed, or at least parted with in accordance with the will of the employer. But the phrase used by the diarist seems intended to express exactly what happened when the poet, once more discontented, took himself off from Ferrara and its Duke. He seems to have done so in a manner which gave deep and lasting offence. In a subsequent passage of the above-quoted diary we read, 'the Cavaliere Batista Guarini having absented himself from Ferrara, disgusted with the Duke, betook himself to Florence, and then, by the intermedium of Guido Coccapani the agent, asked for his dismissal in form and obtained it.' We happen, however, to have a letter written by this Coccapani, who seems to have been the Duke's private secretary and managing man, in which he gives his version of the matter. He was 'stupefied,' he says, 'when he received the extravagant letter of the Cavaliere Guarini, and began to think that it would be with him as it had been with Tasso,' who by that time had fallen into disgrace. There is reason to think that he left Ferrara secretly, without taking leave of the Duke, or letting anybody at court know where he had gone. He did, however, obtain his formal dismissal, as has been said, but the Duke by no means forgave him.

Though it would appear that on leaving Ferrara in this irregular manner he went in the first instance to Florence, it seems that he had had hopes given him of a comfortable position and honourable provision at Turin. He was to have been made a Counsellor of State, and entrusted with the task of remodelling the course of study at the university, with a stipend of six hundred crowns annually. But on arriving at Turin he found difficulties in the way. In fact, the angry Duke of Ferrara had used his influence with the Duke of Savoy to prevent anything being done for his contumacious Secretary of State. Guarini, extremely mortified, had to leave Turin, and betook himself to Venice.

His adventure, however, was of a nature to cause great scandal in that clime and time. As usual, the Italians were offended at the 'imprudence' of which Guarini's temper had led him to be guilty, more than they would have been by many a fault which among ourselves would be deemed a very much worse one. A violence of temper or indignation shown in such a manner as to injure *one's own* interests is, and in a yet greater degree was, a spectacle extremely disgusting to Italian moral sentiment.

The outcry against Guarini on this occasion was so great that he found himself obliged to put forth an exculpatory statement.

'If human actions, my most kind readers,' he begins, 'always bore marked on the front of them the aims and motives which

have produced them, or if those who talk about them were always well informed enough to be able to judge of them without injury to the persons of whom they speak, I should not be compelled, at my age, and after so many years of a life led in the eyes of the world, and often busied in defending the honour of others, to defend this day my own, which has always been dearer to me than my life. Having heard, then, that my having left the service of His Serene Highness the Duke of Ferrara and entered that of the Duke of Savoy has given occasion to some persons, ignorant probably of the real state of the case, to make various remarks, and form various opinions, I have determined to publish the truth, and at the same time to declare my own sentiments in the matter.

I declare, then, that previously to my said departure I consigned to the proper person everything, small as it was, which was in my hands regarding my office, which had always been exercised by me uprightly and without any other object in view than the service of my sovereign and the public welfare. Further, that I, by a written paper under my own hand (as the press of time and my need rendered necessary), requested a free and decorous dismissal from the Duke in question, and also, that I set forth in all humility the causes which led me to that determination; and I added (some of the circumstances in which I was compelling me to do so) that if His Serene Highness did not please to give me any other answer, I would take his silence as a consent to my request of dismissal. I declare further that the paper was delivered to the principal Minister of his Serene Highness, and lastly, that my salary was, without any further communication with me, stopped, and cancelled from the roll of payments. And as this is the truth, so it is equally true that my appointment as reformer of the University of Turin, and Counsellor of State with six hundred crowns yearly, was settled and concluded with His Serene Highness the Duke of Savoy, and that I declined to bind myself, and did not bind myself, to ask any other dismissal from His Serene Highness the Duke of Ferrara than that of which I have already spoken. And, finally, it is true that, as I should not have gone to Turin if I had not been engaged for that service and invited thither, so I should not have left, or wished to leave this place,¹ had I not known that I received my dismissal in the manner above related. Now, as to the cause which may have retarded and may still retard the fulfilment of the engagement above mentioned, I have neither object, nor obligation, nor need to

¹ It is odd that he should so write in a paper dated, as the present is, from Venice. I suppose the expression came from his feeling that he was addressing persons at Ferrara.

declare it. Suffice it that it is not retarded by any fault of mine, or difficulty on my side. In justification of which I offered myself, and by these presents now again offer myself, to present myself wheresoever, whensoever, and in whatsoever manner, and under whatsoever conditions and penalties, as may be seen more clearly set forth in the instrument of agreement sent by me to His Highness. From all which, I would have the world to know, while these affairs of mine are still in suspension, that I am a man of honour, and am always ready to maintain the same in whatsoever manner may be fitting to my condition and duty. And as I do not at all doubt that some decision of some kind not unworthy of so just and so magnanimous a prince will be forthcoming; so, let it be what it may, it will be received by me with composure and contentment; since, by God's grace, and that of the serene and exalted power under the most just and happy dominion of which I am now living, and whose subject, if not by birth, yet by origin and family, I am,¹ I have a comfortable and an honoured existence. And may you, my honoured readers, live in happiness and contentment. Venice, February 1, 1589.'

We must, I think, nevertheless be permitted to doubt the contentment and happiness of the life he led, as it should seem, for the next four years, at Venice. No such decision of any kind, as he hoped from the Duke of Savoy, was forthcoming. He was disappointed! He had quarrelled with his own sovereign, and evidently the other would have none of him. The Italians of one city were in those days to a wonderful degree foreigners in another ruled by a different government; and there can be little doubt that Guarini wandered among the quays and 'calle' of Venice, or paced the great piazza at the evening hour, a moody and discontented man!

At last, after nearly four years of this sad life, there came an invitation from the Duke of Mantua proposing that Guarini should come to Mantua together with his son Alessandro, to occupy honourable positions in that court. The poet, heartily sick of 'retirement,' accepted at once, and went to Mantua. But there, too, another disappointment awaited him. The 'magnanimous' Duke Alphonso would not tolerate that the man who had so cavalierly left his service should find employment elsewhere. It is probable that this position was obtained for him by the influence of his old friend and fellow-member of the 'Etherials' at Padua, Scipione Gonzaga; and it would seem that he occupied it for a while, and went on behalf of the Duke of Mantua to Innspruck, whence he wrote the wonderful letters which have been quoted.

¹ Seeing that, as has been said, his ancestors were of Verona, which belonged to Venice.

The Cardinal's influence, however, was not strong enough to prevail against the spite of a neighbouring sovereign. There are two letters extant from the Duke, or his private secretary, to the same Coccapani whom we saw so scandalised at Guarini's hurried and informal departure from Ferrara, and who was residing as Alphonso's representative at Mantua, in which the Minister is instructed to represent to the Duke of Mantua that his brother of Ferrara 'did not think it well that the former should take any of the Guarini family into his service, and when they should see each other he would tell him his reasons. For the present he would only say that he wished the Duke to know that it would be exceedingly pleasing to him if the Duke would have nothing to say to any of them.'

This was in 1593; and the world-weary poet found himself at fifty-six once again cast adrift upon the world. The extremity of his disgust and weariness of all things may be measured by the nature of the next step he took. He conceived, says his biographer Barotti, that 'God called him by internal voices, and by promises of a more tranquil life, to accept the tonsure.' His wife had died some little time before; and it was therefore open to him to do so. He went to Rome accordingly for the purpose of there taking orders. But during the short delay which intervened between the manifestation of his purpose and the fulfilment of it, news reached him that his friend and protectress the Duchess of Urbino, Alphonso's sister, had interceded for him with the Duke, and that he was forgiven! It was open to him to return to his former employment. And no sooner did the news reach him than he perceived that 'the internal voices' were altogether a mistake. God had never called him at all, and Alphonso had! All thoughts of the Church were abandoned on the instant, and he hastened to Ferrara, arriving there on the 15th of April, 1595.

But neither on this occasion was he destined to find the tranquillity which he seemed fated never to attain! And this time the break-up was a greater and more final one than the last. Duke Alphonso died in 1597; and the Pontifical Court, which had long had its eye on the possibility of enforcing certain pretended claims to the Duchy of Ferrara, found the means at Alphonso's death of ousting his successor the Duke Cesare, who remained thenceforward Duke of Modena only, but no longer of Ferrara.

Guarini was once more adrift! Nor were the political changes in Ferrara the only thing which rendered the place no longer a home for him. Other misfortunes combined to render a residence in the city odious to him. His daughter Anna had married a noble gentleman of Ferrara, the Count Ercole Trotti, by whom she

was on the 3rd of May, 1598, murdered at his villa of Zanzalino near Ferrara. Some attempt was made to assert that the husband had reason to suspect that his wife was plotting against his life. But there seems to have been no foundation for any accusation of the sort; and the crime was prompted probably by jealousy. Guarini, always on bad terms with his sons, and constantly involved in litigation with them, as he had been with his father, was exceedingly attached to this unfortunate daughter.

But even this terrible loss was not the only bitterness which resulted from this crime. Guarini composed a long Latin epitaph, in which he strongly affirms her absolute innocence of everything that had been laid to her charge, and speaks with reprobation of the husband's ¹ crime. But scarcely had the stone bearing the inscription been erected than the indignant father was required by the authorities of the city to remove it. A declaration, which he published on the subject, dated June 15, 1598, is still extant. 'On that day,' he writes, 'the Vice-legate of Ferrara spoke with me, in the name of the Holy Father, as to the removing of the epitaph written by me on Anna my daughter in the church of Sta. Catherina. He said that there were things in it that might provoke other persons to resentment, and occasion much scandal; and that, besides that, there were in the inscription words of Sacred Scripture, which ought not to be used in such a place. I defended my cause, and transmitted a memorial to his Holiness, having good reason to know that these objections were the mere malignity of those who favour the opposite party, and of those who caused the death of my innocent child. But at last, on the 22nd, I caused the epitaph to be removed, intimating that it was my intention to take up the body, and inter it elsewhere. On which it is worthy of remark, that having made my demand to that effect, I was forbidden to do so.' He further adds: 'Note! news was brought to me here that my son Girolamo, who was evidently discovered to be the accomplice, and principal atrocious author of the death of his sister Anna, received from the Potestà of Rovigo licence to come into the Polisina with twelve men armed with arquebuses.'

All this is very sad; and whether these terrible suspicions may or may not have had any foundation other than the envenomed temper generated by the family litigations, it must equally have had the effect of making the life of Guarini a very miserable one, and contributing to his determination to abandon finally his native city.

¹ Barotti gives it at length; but it is hardly worth while to occupy space by reproducing it here.

More surprising is it that, after so many disgusts and disappointments, he should once again have been tempted to seek what he had never yet been able to find there, in a court. In a letter written in November, 1598, he informs the Duke Cesare (Duke of Modena, though no longer of Ferrara) that the Grand Duke of Florence had offered him a position at Florence. And Serene Highness, more kindly and forgiving than the late Duke, wrote him an obliging and congratulatory letter in the following month.

At Florence everything at first seemed to be going well with him, and he seemed to stand high in favour with the Grand Duke Ferdinand. But very shortly he quitted Florence in anger and disgust on the discovery of the secret marriage of his third son, Guarini, with a woman of low condition at Pisa, with at least the connivance, as the poet thought, whether justly or not there being nothing to show, of the Grand Duke.

After that his old friend the Duchess of Urbino once again stood his friend, and he obtained a position in the court of Urbino, then one of the most widely famed centres of cultivation and letters in Italy. And for a while everything seemed at last to well with him there. On the 23rd of February, 1603, he writes his sister, who apparently had been pressing him to come home to Ferrara:—‘I should like to come home, my sister. I have great need and a great desire for home; but I am treated so well here and with so much distinction and so much kindness, that I cannot come. I must tell you that all expenses for myself and servants are supplied, so that I have not to spend a farthing for anything in the world that I need. The orders are that anything I ask for should be furnished to me. Besides all which, they give me three hundred crowns a year; so that, what with money and expenses, the position is worth six hundred crowns a year to me. You may judge, then, if I can throw it up. May God grant you every happiness!’

Your brother,

B. GUARINI.

But all would not do. He had been but a very little time in this little Umbrian Athens among the Apennines before he once again threw up his position in anger and disgust, because he could not obtain all the marks of distinction to which he thought that he was entitled. This was in 1603. He was now sixty-six, and seems at length to have made no further attempt to haunt a court. Once again he was at Rome in 1605, having undertaken, at the request of the citizens of Ferrara, to carry their felicitations to the new Pope, Paul the Fifth. And with the exception of that short

expedition his last years were spent in the retirement of his ancestral estate of Guarina.

The property is situated in the district of Lendinara, on the fat and fertile low-lying region between Rovigo and Padua, and belongs to the commune—parish, as we should say—of St. Bellino. The house, dating probably from the latter part of the fifteenth century, is not much more than a hundred yards or so from the piazza of the village, which boasts two thousand inhabitants. The road between the two is bordered with trees. The whole district is as flat as a billiard table, and as prosaical in its well-to-do fertility as can be imagined. It is intersected by a variety of streams, natural and artificial. About a couple of miles from the house to the south is the Canabianco; and a little farther to the north the Adigetto. To the east runs the Scortico. St. Bellino, from whom the village is named, was, it seems, enrolled among the martyrs by Pope Eugenius the Third in 1152. He has a great specialty for curing the bite of mad dogs. There is a grand cenotaph in his honour in the village church, which was raised by some of the Guarini family. But this, too, like all else, became a subject of trouble and litigation to our poet. A certain Baldassare Bonifaccio of Rovigo wanted to transport the saint to that city. Guarini would not hear of this; litigated the matter before the tribunals of Venice, and prevailed. So the saint still resides at St. Bellino to the comfort of all those bitten by mad dogs in those parts. The house and estate have passed through several hands since that time; but a number of old family portraits may still be seen on the walls, together with the family arms, and the motto, 'Fortis est in asperis non turbari.' The armchair and writing table of the poet are also still preserved in the house, and a fig-tree is pointed out close by it, under the shade of which the poet, as tradition tells, wrote on that table and in that chair his 'Pastor Fido.' There is an inscription on the chair as follows: 'Guarin sedendo qui cantò, che vale al paragon seggio¹ reale.'

It was not, however, during this his last residence here that the 'Pastor Fido' was written, but long previously. It was doubtless his habit to escape from the cares of official life in Ferrara from time to time as he could; and it must have been in such moments that the celebrated pastoral was written.²

¹ 'Guarini sitting here, sang, that which renders the seat the equal of a royal throne.'

² It is very doubtful and very difficult to determine at what period of his life the 'Pastor Fido' was written. Ginguené (Hist. Ital. Lit. Part II. ch. xxv.) has sufficiently shown that the statements of the Italian biographers on this point are inaccurate. Probably it was planned and, in part, written many years before it was finished. It was first printed in 1590.

The idea of a scholar and a poet, full of years and honours, passing the quiet evening of his life in a tranquil retirement in his own house on his own land, is a pleasing one. But it is to be feared that in the case of the author of the 'Pastor Fido' it would be a fallacious one. Guarini would not have come to live on his estate if he could have lived contentedly in any city. We may picture him to ourselves sitting under his fig-tree, or pacing at evening under the trees of the straight avenue between his house and the village, or on the banks of one of the sluggish streams slowly finding their way through the flat fields towards the Po; but I am afraid the picture must be of one 'Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,' with eyes bent earthwards, and discontented mind: 'remote,' because to the Italian mind all places beyond the easy reach of a city are so; 'unfriended,' because he had quarrelled with everybody: 'melancholy,' because all had gone amiss with him, and his life had been a failure; 'slow,' because no spring of hope in the mind gave any elasticity to his step.

One other 'haunt' of the aged poet must, however, be mentioned, because it is a very characteristic one. During this last residence at Guarina, he hired an apartment at Ferrara, selecting it in a crowded part of the centre of the city, especially frequented by the lawyers, that he might be in the midst of them, when he went into the city on the various business connected with his interminable lawsuits. The most crowded part of the heart of the city of Ferrara! It would be difficult to find any such part now. But the picture offered to the imagination, of the aged poet, professor, courtier, haunting the courts, the lawyers' chambers, leaving his, at least, tranquil retreat at St. Bellino, to drag weary feet through the lanes of the city in which he had in earlier days played so different a part, is a sad one. But there are people who like contention so much that such work is a labour of love to them. And certainly, if the inference may be drawn from the fact of his never having been free from lawsuits in one quarrel or another, Guarini must have been one of these. But it is passing strange that the same man should have been the author of the 'Pastor Fido.'

They pursued him to the end, these litigations; or he pursued them! And at last he died, not at Guarina, but at Venice, on the 7th of October, 1612, where, characteristically enough, he chanced to be on the business connected with some lawsuit.

And now a few words must be said about his great work, the 'Pastor Fido.' It is one of the strangest things in the range of literary history that such a man should have written such a poem. He was, one would have said, the last man in the world to produce

such a work. The first ten years of his working life were spent in the labour of a pedagogue; the rest of it in the inexpressibly dry, frivolous, and ungenial routine of a small Italian court, or in wandering from one to the other of them in the vain and always disappointed search for such employment. We are told that he was a punctilious, stiff, unbending, angular man; upright and honourable, but unforgiving and wont to nurse his enmities. He was soured, disappointed, discontented with everybody and everything, involved in litigation first with his father, and then with his own children. And this was the man who wrote the 'Pastor Fido,' of all poems comparable to it in reputation the lightest, the airiest, and the most fantastic! The argument of it is as follows:

The Arcadians, suffering in various ways from the anger of Diana, were at last informed by the oracle that the evils which afflicted them would cease when a youth and a maiden, both descended from the Immortals, as it should seem the *crème de la crème* of Arcadian society mostly was, should be joined together in faithful love. Thereupon Montano, a priest of the goddess who was descended from Hercules, arranged that his only son Silvio should be betrothed to Amaryllis, the only daughter of Tytirus, who was descended from Pan. The arrangement seemed all that could be desired, only that a difficulty arose from the fact that Silvio, whose sole passion was the chase, could not be brought to care the least in the world for Amaryllis. Meantime Mirtillo, the son, as was supposed, of the shepherd Carino, fell desperately in love with Amaryllis. She was equally attached to him, but dared not in the smallest degree confess her love, because the law of Arcadia would have punished with death her infidelity to her betrothed vows. A certain Corisca, however, who had conceived a violent but unrequited passion for Mirtillo, perceiving or guessing the love of Amaryllis for him, hating her accordingly, and hoping that, if she could be got out of the way, she might win Mirtillo's love, schemes by deceit and lies to induce Mirtillo and Amaryllis to enter together a cave, which they do in perfect innocence, and without any thought of harm. Then she contrives that they should be caught there, and denounced by a satyr; and Amaryllis is condemned to die. The law, however, permits that her life may be saved by any Arcadian who will voluntarily die in her stead; and this Mirtillo determines to do, although he believes that Amaryllis cares nothing for him, and also is led by the false Corisca to believe that she had gone into the cave for the purpose of meeting with another lover. The duty of sacrificing him devolves on Montano the priest; and he is about to carry out the law, when Carino, who has been seeking his reputed son Mirtillo, comes in, and while attempting

to make out that he is a foreigner, and therefore not capable of satisfying the law by his death, brings unwittingly to light circumstances that prove that he is in truth a son of Montano, and therefore a descendant of the god Hercules. It thus appears that a marriage between Mirtillo and Amaryllis will exactly satisfy the conditions demanded by the oracle. There is an underplot, which consists in providing a lover and a marriage for the woman-hater Silvio. He is loved in vain by the nymph Dorinda whom he unintentionally wounds with an arrow while out hunting. The pity he feels for her wound softens his heart towards her, and all parties are made happy by this second marriage.

Such is a skeleton of the story of the 'Pastor Fido.' It will be observed that there is more approach to a plot and to human interest than in any previous production of this kind, and some of the situations are well conceived for dramatic effect. And accordingly the success which it achieved was immediate and immense. Nor, much as the taste of the world has been changing since that day, has it ever lost its place in the estimation of cultivated Italians.

It would be wholly uninteresting to attempt any account of the wide-spreading literary controversies to which the publication of the 'Pastor Fido' gave rise. The author terms it a *tragi-comedy* and this title was violently attacked. The poet himself, as may well be imagined from the idiosyncrasy of the man, was not slow to reply to his critics, and did so in two lengthy treatises entitled from the name of a contemporary celebrated actor, '*Verato primo*' and '*Verato secondo*,' which are printed in the four-quarto-volume edition of his works, but which probably no mortal eye has read in the last two hundred years!

The question of the rivalry between the '*Aminta*' of Tasso and the '*Pastor Fido*' has an element of greater interest in it. It is certain that the former preceded the latter, and doubtless suggested it. It seems probable that Ginguené is right in his suggestion, that Guarini, fully conscious that no hope was open to him of rivalling his greater contemporary and townsman in epic poetry, strove to surpass him in pastoral. It must be admitted that he has at least equalled him. Yet, while it is impossible to deny that almost every page of the '*Pastor Fido*' indicates not much plagiarism as an open and avowed purpose of doing the same thing better, if possible, than his rival has done it, the very diverse natural character of the two poets is also, at every page curiously indicated. Specially the reader may be recommended to compare the passages in the two poems where Tasso under the name of *Thyrsis*, and Guarini under the name of *Carino* (*Act scene 1*), represent the sufferings both underwent at the court

Alphonso II. The lines of Guarini are perhaps the most vigorous in their biting satire. But the gentler and nobler nature of Tasso is unmistakable.

It is strange that the Italian critics, who are for the most part so lenient to the licentiousness of most of the authors of this period, blame Guarini for the too great warmth, amounting to indecency, of his poem. The writer of his life in the French 'Biographie Universelle' refers to certain scenes as highly indecent. I can only say that, on examining the passages indicated carefully, I could find no indecency at all. It is probable that the writer referred to had never read the pages in question. But it is odd that those whose criticism he is no doubt reflecting should have said so. No doubt there are passages, not those mentioned by the writer in the 'Biographie,' but for instance the first scene of the second act, when a young man in a female disguise is one among a party of girls, who propose a prize for her who can give to one of them, the judge, the sweetest kiss, which prize he wins, which might be deemed somewhat on the sunny side of the hedge that divides the permissible from the unpermissible. But in comparison with others of that age Guarini is pure as snow!

It has been said in speaking of the sad story of his daughter Anna, that she was accused of having given her husband cause for jealousy. It would seem very clear that there was no ground for any such accusation. But it was said that the misconduct on her part had been due to the corruption of her mind by the reading of her father's verses. The utter groundlessness of such an assertion might be shown in many ways. But the savage and malignant cruelty of it points with considerable evidence to the sources of the current talk about the courtier poet's licentiousness.

It is impossible to find room here for a detailed comparison between these two celebrated pastorals; and it is the less needed inasmuch as Ginguené has done it very completely and at great length in the twenty-fifth chapter of the second part of his work.

Guarini also produced a comedy, the 'Idropica,' which was acted with much success at the court of Mantua, and is printed among his works, as well as some prose pieces of small importance, the principal of which is 'Il Secretario,' a treatise on the duties of a secretary, not printed among his works, but of which an edition exists in pot quarto (186 pages) printed at Venice in 1594. Neither have his letters been printed among his works. They exist, printed without index or order of any kind, in a volume of the same size as the 'Secretario,' printed at Venice also in 1595, but by a different printer.

The name, however, of Batista Guarini would have long since been forgotten had he not written the 'Pastor Fido.'

A Quartette of Sonnets.

I.—WINTER-MORN IN THE COUNTRY.

THE Sabbath of all Nature! Stillness reigns:
 For snow has fallen, and all the land is white.
 The cottage-roofs slant grey against the light,
 And grey the sky, nor cloud nor blue obtains.

The sun is moonlike, as a maiden feigns
 To veil her beauty, yet sends glances bright
 That fill the eye, and make the heart delight,
 Expectant of some wonder. Lengthened trains

Of birds wing high, and straight the smoke ascends.
 All things are fairy-like: the trees empearled
 With frosty gem-work, like to trees in dream.

Beneath the weight the slender cedar bends
 And looks more ghost-like! 'Tis a wonder-world,
 Wherein, indeed, things are not as they seem.

II.—WINTER-MORN IN TOWN.

THROUGH yellow fog all things take spectral shapes:
 Lamps dimly gleam, and through the window pane
 The light is shed in short and broken lane;
 And 'darkness visible' pants, yawns, and gapes.

From roofs the water drips, as from high capes,
 Half-freezes as it falls. Like cries of pain
 Fog-signals faintly heard, and then again
 Grave warning words to him who rashly apes

The skater, nearer. All is muffled fast
 In dense dead coils of vapour, nothing clear—
 The world disguised in mumming masquerade.

O'er each a dull thick clinging veil is cast,
 And no one is what fain he would appear:
 Nor any well-marked track on which to tread.

III.—'A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.'

I SAW to-day a sight that made me sigh;
 Yet brought me too a thrill of quiet joy:
 A little child that would with wiles decoy
 Her tipsy father past the tempting sty

Where men seek Life in Death. Intent her eye
 To homeward, while her little hands employ
 Themselves in his. Delight that will not cloy!
 He rises, follows, as she leads him by

The glittering doors: her thin black clothing speaks
 Of sister, brother gone, or mother lost—
 A faithful helpmate 'mid adversity.

Most like the last; and, as the work-charged weeks
 Fly onward, may thy efforts ne'er be crost,
 To do all that thy mother did by thee!

IV.—G. P. CHALMERS, B.S.A.—IN MEMORIAM.

the writer's early friend, whose favourite idea was that there was nothing in
 a that could not be painted. He was killed in Edinburgh, Feb. 20, 1878.]

O ARTIST true, who after struggle great
 Didst set a mark upon thy country's taste,
 And show that in all Nature is no waste
 Of beauty: all doth for the artist wait.

I would that I, with thee, could contemplate
 The 'old familiar' scenes where oft we paced,
 And youthful talk with Art and Poetry graced,
 Until the moon did warn us it was late.

This had we purposed; but the fatal hand
 Fell on thee; and I mourn the genius lost,
 Who only half his powers had yet revealed;

But more I mourn the nature gracious, bland,
 The generous heart with no small grudges crost,
 The loving friend in friendliest union sealed.

ALEX. H. JAPP.

Theatrical Make-shifts and Blunders.

It is a generally received opinion that all stage wardrobes ~~are~~ are made up of tawdry rags, and that the landscapes and palaces that look so charming by gaslight are but mere daubs ~~by~~ by day. But there are wardrobes *and* wardrobes, scenery and scenery. The dresses used for some great 'get up' at the opera houses, *or* at the principal London and provincial theatres, are costly and magnificent; the scenery, although painted for distance and artificial light, is really the product of artists of talent, and there is an attention to reality in all the adjuncts that would quite startle the believers in the tinsel and tawdry view. A millionaire might take a lesson from the stage drawing-rooms of the Prince of Wales and the Court Theatres, and no cost is spared to procure the *real* article, whatever it may be, that is required for the scene. These minutiae of realism, however, are quite a modern idea, dating no farther back than the days of Boucicault and Fechter. Splendid scenery and gorgeous dresses for the legitimate dramas were introduced by John Kemble, and developed to the utmost extent by Macready and Kean; but it was reserved for the present decade to lavish the same attention and expenses upon the petite drama. Half a century ago the property maker manufactured the stage furniture, the stage books, the candelabra, curtains, cloths, pictures, &c., out of papier-mâché and tinsel; and the drawing-room or library of a gentleman's mansion thus presented bore as much resemblance to the reality as sea-side furnished lodgings do to a ducal palace. Before the Kemble time a green baize, a couple of chairs and a table, sufficed for all furnishing purposes, whether for an inn or a palace.

In these days of 'theatrical upholstery,' we can scarcely realise the shabbiness of the stage of the last century. There were a few handsome suits for the principal actors, but the less important ones were frequently dressed in costumes that had done service for fifty years, until they were worn threadbare and frequently in rags. Endeavour to realise upon the modern stage such a picture as this given by Tate Wilkinson, of his appearance at Covent Garden as 'The Fine Gentleman,' in 'Lethe.' 'A very short old suit of clothes, with a black velvet ground, and broad, gold flowers as dingy as the twenty-four letters on a piece of gingerbread; it had not seen the light since the first year Garrick played "Lothario" at the theatre.

Bedecked in that sable array for the modern "Fine Gentleman," and to make the appearance complete, I added an old red surtout, trimmed with a dingy white fur, and a deep skinned cape of the same hue, borrowed by old Giffard, I was informed, at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, to play "King Lear" in.' When West Digges appeared at the Haymarket as Cardinal Wolsey, it was in the identical dress that Barton Booth had worn in Queen Anne's time: a close-fitting habit of gilt leather upon a black ground, black stockings, and black gauntlets. No wonder Foote, who was in the pit, exclaimed, upon the appearance of this extraordinary figure, 'A Roman sweep on May-day!' When Quin played the youthful fascinating Chamont, in Otway's 'Orphan,' he wore a long grisly half-powdered periwig, hanging low down each side his breast and down his back, a huge scarlet coat and waistcoat, heavily trimmed with gold, black velvet breeches, black silk neckcloth, black stockings, a pair of square-toed shoes, with an old-fashioned pair of stone buckles, stiff high-topped white gloves, with a broad old scolloped lace hat. Such a costume upon a personage not in his first youth, and more than inclined to obesity, must have had an odd effect. But then, as is well known, Garrick played 'Macbeth' in a scarlet coat and powdered wig; John Kemble performed 'Othello' in a full suit of British scarlet regimentals, and even when he had gone so far as to dress 'Macbeth' as a highlander of 1745, wore in his bonnet a tremendous hearse plume, until Scott plucked it out, and placed an eagle's feather there in its stead. The costumes of the ladies were almost more absurd. Whether they appeared as Romans, Greeks, or females of the Middle Ages, they dressed the same—in the huge hoop, and powdered hair raised high upon the head, heavy brocaded robes that required two pages to hold up, without whose assistance they could scarcely have moved; and servants were dressed quite as magnificently as their mistresses.

In scenery there was no attempt at 'sets;' a drop, and a pair of 'flats,' dusty and dim with age, were all the scenic accessories; and two or three hoops of tallow candles, suspended above the stage, were all that represented the blaze of gas and lime-light to which we are accustomed. The candle-snuffer was a theatrical post of some responsibility in those days. Garrick was the first who used concealed lights. The uncouth appearance of the stage was rendered still worse on crowded nights by ranges of seats raised for spectators on each side. The most ridiculous *contretemps* frequently resulted from this incongruity. Romeo, sometimes, when he bore out the body of Juliet from the solitary tomb of the

Capulets, had to almost force his way through a throng of beaux, and Macbeth and his lady plotted the murder of Duncan amidst a throng of people.

One night, Hamlet, upon the appearance of the Ghost, threw his hat, as usual, preparatory to the address, when a kind-hearted dame, who had heard him just before complain of its being 'very cold,' picked it up and good-naturedly clapped it upon his head again. A similar incident once happened during the performance of Pizarro. Elvira is discovered asleep upon a couch, gracefully covered by a rich velvet cloak; Valverde enters, kneels and kisses her hair. Elvira awakes, rises and lets fall the covering, and is about indignantly repulse her unwelcome visitor, when a timid female voice says: 'Please, ma'am, you've dropped your mantle,' and a timid hand is trying to replace it upon the tragedy queen's shoulders. Of another kind, but very much worse, was an accident that befell Mrs. Siddons at Edinburgh, at the hands of another person who failed to distinguish between the real person and the counterfeit. Just before going on for the sleep-walking scene, she had sent a boy for some porter, but the cue for her entrance was given before he returned. The house was awed into shuddering silence as, in a terrible whisper, she uttered the words 'Out, out, damned spot!' and with slow mechanical action rubbed the guilty hands; when suddenly there emerged from the wings a small figure holding out a pewter pot, and a shrill voice broke the awful silence with 'Here's your porter, mum.' Imagine the feelings of the stately Siddons! The story is very funny to read, but depend upon it the incident gave her the most cruel anguish.

It is not, however, to the uninitiated outsiders alone we are indebted for ludicrous stage contretemps; the experts themselves have frequently given rise to them. All readers of Elia will remember the name of Bensley, one of 'the old actors' upon whom he discourses so eloquently—a grave precise man, whose composure no accident could ruffle, as the following anecdote will prove. One night, as he was making his first entrance as Richard III., at the Dublin Theatre, his wig caught upon a nail in the side scene, and was dragged off. Catching his hat by the feather, however, he calmly replaced it as he walked to the centre of the stage, but left his hair still attached to the nail. Quite unmoved by the occurrence, he commenced his soliloquy; but so rich a subject could not escape the wit of an Irish audience. 'Bensley, darlin', shouted a voice from the gallery, 'put on your jaisey!' 'Bad luck to your politics, will you suffer a *whig* to be hung?' shouted another. But the tragedian, deaf to all clamour, never faltered, never betrayed the least annoyance, spoke the speech to the end, stalked to the

wing, detached the wig from the nail, and made his exit with it in his hand.

Novices under the influence of stage fright will say and do the most extraordinary things. Some years ago, I witnessed a laughable incident during the performance of 'Hamlet' at a theatre in the North. Although a very small part, consisting as it does of only one speech, the 'Second Actor' is a very difficult one, the language being peculiarly cramped. In the play scene he assassinates the player king by pouring poison into his ear. The speech preceding the action is as follows :

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing ;
Confederate season, else no creature seeing ;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property
On wholesome life usurp immediately.

Upon which follows the stage direction—' *Pours poison into his ear.*'

In a play of so many characters as Hamlet, such a part, in a second-class theatre, can be given only to a very inferior performer. The one to whom it was entrusted on the present occasion was a novice. Muffled in a black coat and a black slouched hat, and with a face half hidden by burnt cork, he looked a most villanous villain, as he stole on and gazed about in the most approved melodramatic fashion. Then he began, in a strong north country brogue,—

Thoughts black, hands apt,—

then his memory failed him, and he stuck fast. The prompter whispered 'drugs fit ;' but stage fright had seized him, and he could not take the word. He tried back, but stuck again at the same place. Half-a-dozen people were all prompting him at the same time now, but all in vain. At length one more practical than the rest whispered angrily, ' Pour the poison in his ear and get off.' The suggestion restored a glimmering of reason to the trembling perspiring wretch. He could not remember the words of Shakespeare, so he improvised a line. Advancing to the sleeping figure, he raised the vial in his hand, and in a terribly tragic tone shouted, ' Into his ear-hole this I'll power !'

Some extraordinary and agonising mistakes, for tragedians, have been made in what are called the flying messages in 'Richard III.' and 'Macbeth,' by novices in their nervousness mixing up their own parts with the context ; as when Catesby rushed on and cried, ' My lord, the Duke of Buckingham's taken.' There he should have stopped while Richard replied, ' Off with his head \ so

much for Buckingham !' But in his flurry the shaking messenger added, 'and they've cut off his head !' With a furious look at having been robbed of one of his finest 'points,' the tragedian roared out, 'Then, damn you, go and stick it on again !' Another story is told of an actor playing one of the officers in the fifth act of 'Macbeth.' 'My lord,' he has to say, 'there are ten thousand ——' 'Geese, villain,' interrupts Macbeth. 'Ye—es, my lord !' answered the messenger, losing his memory in his terror.

But a far more dreadful anecdote is related of the same play. A star was playing the guilty Thane in a very small company, where each member had to sustain three or four different characters. During the performance the man appointed to play the first murderer was taken ill. There was not another to be spared, and the only resource left was to send on a supernumerary, supposed to be intelligent, to stand for the character. 'Keep close to the wing,' said the prompter ; 'I'll read you the words, and you can repeat them after me.' The scene was the banquet ; the super was pushed on, and Macbeth, striding down the stage, seized his arm and said in a stage whisper, 'There's blood upon thy face.' 'Tis Banquo's, then,' was the prompt. Lost and bewildered—having never spoken in his life before upon the stage—by the tragedian's intense yet natural tones, the fellow, imitating them in the most confidential manner, answered, 'Is there, by God ?' put his hand up to his forehead, and, finding it stained with rose pink, added, 'Then the property man's served me a trick !'

Once upon a time I was present at the performance of the celebrated dog piece, 'The Forest of Bondy,' in a small country theatre. The plot turns upon a well-known story, the discovery of a murder through the sagacity of the victim's dog. The play-bill descanted most eloquently upon the wonderful genius of the 'highly trained' animal, and was sufficient to raise expectation on tip-toe. Yet it had evidently failed to impress the public of this town, their experiences probably having rendered them sceptical of such pufferies, for the house was miserably bad. The first entrance of 'the celebrated dog Cæsar,' however, in attendance upon his master, was greeted with loud applause. He was a fine young black Newfoundland, whose features were more descriptive of good nature than genius. He sat on his haunches and laughed at the audience, and pricked up his ears at the sound of a boy munching a biscuit in the pit. I could perceive he was a novice, and that he would forget all he had been taught when he came to the test. While Aubrey, the hero, is passing through a forest at night, he is attacked by two ruffians, and after a desperate combat is killed ; the dog is supposed to be kept out of the way. But in

the very midst of the fight, Cæsar, whose barking had been distinctly heard all the time, rushed on the stage. Far from evincing any ferocity towards his master's foes, he danced about with a joyous bark, evidently considering it famous fun. Aubrey was furious, and kicked out savagely at his faithful 'dawg,' thereby laying himself open to the swords of his adversaries, who, however, in consideration that the combat had not been long enough, generously refused the advantages. 'Get off, you beast!' growled Aubrey, who evidently desired to fight it out without canine interference. At length, when the faltering applause from the gallery began to show that the gods had had enough of it, the assassins buried their swords beneath the victim's arms, and he expired in great agony; Cæsar looking on from the respectful distance to which his master's kick had sent him, with the unconcern of a person who had seen it all done at rehearsal and knew it was all sham, but with a decided interest of eye and ear in the direction of the biscuit-muncher. In the next act he was to leap over a stile and ring the bell at a farm house, and, having awakened the inhabitants, seize a lantern which is brought out, and lead them to the spot where the villains have buried his master. After a little prompting Cæsar leaped the stile and went up to the bell, round the handle of which was twisted some red cloth to imitate meat: but there never was a more matter-of-fact dog than this; he evidently hated all shams, even artistic ones; and after a sniff at the red rag he walked off disgusted, and could not be induced to go on again; so the people had to rush out without being summoned, carry their own lantern, and find their way by a sort of canine instinct, or scent, to the scene of the murder. But Cæsar's delinquencies culminated in the last scene, where, after the chief villain, in a kind of lynch law trial, has stoutly asserted his innocence, the sagacious 'dawg' suddenly bounds upon the stage, springs at his throat, and puts an end to his infamous career. Being held by the collar, and incited on, in the side scene, Cæsar's deep bark sounded terribly ferocious, and seemed to foreshadow a bloody catastrophe; but his bark proved worse than his bite, for when released he trotted on with a most affable expression of countenance, his thoughts still evidently bent upon biscuits; in vain did the villain show him the red pad upon his throat and invite him to seize it. Cæsar had been deceived once, and scorned to countenance an imposition. Furious with passion, the villain rushed at him, drew him up on his hind legs, clasped him in his arms, then fell upon the stage and writhed in frightful agonies, shrieking, 'Mussy, mussy, take off the dawg!' and the curtain fell amidst the howls and hisses of the audience.

Another laughable dog story, although of a different kind, was once related to me by a now London actor. In a certain theatre in one of the great northern cities business had been so bad for some time that salaries were very irregularly paid. It is a peculiarity of the actor that he is never so jolly, so full of fun, and altogether so vivacious, as when he is impecunious. In prosperity he is dull and melancholy; the yellow dross seems to weigh down his spirit, to stultify it; empty his pockets, and it etherialises him. At the theatre in question the actors amused themselves if they failed to amuse the audience. Attached to this house was a mongrel cur, whom some of them had taught tricks to while away the tedium of long waits. 'Jack'—such was his name—was well known all round the neighbourhood, and to most of the *habitués* of the house. Among his other accomplishments he could simulate death at command, and could only be recalled to life by a certain piece of information to be presently mentioned. One night the manager was performing 'The Stranger' to about half-a-dozen people. Francis was standing at the wing waiting for his cue when his eye fell upon Jack, who was standing just off the stage on the opposite side; an impish thought struck him—he whistled—Jack pricked up his ears, and Francis slapped his leg and called him. Obedient to the summons Jack trotted before the audience, but as he reached the centre of the stage the word 'dead!' struck upon his ear. The next moment he was stretched motionless with his two hind legs sticking up at an angle of forty-five degrees. The scene was the one in which the Stranger relates to Baron Steinfort the story of his wrongs, and he had come to the line, 'My heart is like a close-shut sepulchre,' when a burst of laughter from the front drew his attention to Jack. He saw the trick that had been played in an instant. 'Get off, you brute!' he growled, giving the animal a kick. But Jack was too highly trained to heed such an admonition, having learned beforehand that the kicking was not so bad as the flogging he would get for not performing his part correctly. 'Doan't tha' kick poor Jack,' called out a rough voice, 'give un the word.' 'Ay, ay, give un the word,' echoed half-a-dozen voices. The manager knew better than to disregard the advice of his patrons, and ground out between his teeth, 'Here's a policeman coming.' At that 'open Sesame' Jack was up and off like a shot. It must have been one of the finest bits of burlesque to have seen that black-ringlet-wigged, sallow, dyspeptic, tragic-looking individual, repeating the clown's formula over a mangy cur.

The failure or forgetfulness of stage properties is frequently a source of ludicrous incidents. People are often killed by

pistols that will not fire, or stabbed with the but ends. In some play an actor has to seize a dagger from a table and stab his rival. One night the dagger was forgotten and no substitute was there except a candle, which the excited actor wrenched from the candlestick, and madly plunged at his opponent's breast; but it effected its purpose, for the victim expired in strong convulsions. It is strange how seldom the audience perceive such *contretemps*, and notice the extraordinary and ludicrous slips of the tongue that are so frequent upon the stage.

A playbill is not always the most truth-telling publication in the world. Managers, driven to their wits' ends to draw a sluggish public, often announce entertainments which they have no means of producing properly, or even at all, and have to exercise an equal amount of ingenuity to find substitutes, or satisfy a deluded audience. Looking through some manuscript letters of R. Peake's the other day, I came across a capital story of Bunn. When he was manager of the Birmingham Theatre, Power, the celebrated Irish comedian, made a starring engagement with him. It was about the time that the dramatic version of Mrs. Shelley's 'Frankenstein'—done, I believe, by Peake himself—was making a great sensation, and Power announced it for his benefit, playing 'the Monster' himself. The manager, however, refused to spend a penny upon the production. 'You must do with what you can find in the theatre,' he said. There was only one difficulty. In the last scene Frankenstein is buried beneath an avalanche, and among the scenery of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, there was nothing resembling an avalanche to be found, and the AVALANCHE was the only prodigious line in the playbill. Power was continually urging the difficulty, but Bunn always eluded it with, 'Oh, we shall find something or other.' At length it came to the day of performance, and the problem had not yet been solved.

'Well, we shall have to change the piece,' said Power.

'Pooh, pooh! nonsense!' answered the manager.

'There is no avalanche, and it is impossible to be finished without.'

'Can't you cut it out?'

'Impossible.'

The manager fell into a brown study for a few moments. Then suddenly brightening up, he said, 'I have it; but they must let the green curtain down instantly on the extraordinary effect. Hanging up in the flies is the large elephant made for "Blue Beard" we'll have it whitewashed.'

'What?' exclaimed Power.

'We'll have it whitewashed,' continued the manager coolly.

‘what is an avalanche but a vast mass of white? When Frankenstein is to be annihilated, the carpenters shall shove the whitened elephant over the flies—destroy you both in a moment—and down comes the curtain.’

As there was no other alternative, Power e’en submitted. The whitened elephant was ‘shoved’ over at the right moment, the effect was appalling from the front, and the curtain descended amidst loud applause.

Not quite so successful was a hoax perpetrated by Elliston, during *his* management of the Birmingham Theatre, many years previously. Then, also, business had been very bad, and he was in great difficulties. Let us give the managers their due. They do not, as a rule, resort to swindles except under strong pressure; then they soothe their consciences with the reflection that as an obtuse and ungrateful public will not support their legitimate efforts, it deserves to be swindled. And a very good reflection it is—from a managerial point of view. No man was more fertile in expedients than Robert William Elliston; so after a long continuance of empty benches, the walls and hoardings of the town were one morning covered with glaring posters announcing that the manager of the Theatre Royal had entered into an engagement with a *BOHEMIAN* of extraordinary strength and stature, who would perform some astonishing evolutions with a stone of upwards of a ton weight, which he would toss about as easily as another would a tennis-ball. What all the famous names of the British drama and all the talents of its exponents had failed to accomplish, was brought about by a stone, and on the evening announced for its appearance the house was crammed to the ceiling. The exhibition was to take place between the play and the farce, and scarcely had the intellectual audience patience to listen to the piece, so eager were they for the noble entertainment that was to follow. At length, much to their relief, the curtain fell. The usual interval elapsed, the house became impatient, impatience soon merged into furious clamour. At length, with a pale, distraught countenance, Elliston rushed before the curtain. In a moment there was a breathless silence.

‘The Bohemian has deceived me!’ were his first words. ‘*That* I could have pardoned; but he has deceived you, my friends, *you*!’ and his voice trembled, and he hid his face behind his handkerchief and seemed to sob.

Then, bursting forth again, he went on: ‘I repeat, he has deceived me; he is not here.’

A yell of disappointment burst from the house.

‘The man,’ continued Elliston, raising his voice, ‘of whatever

name or nation he may be, who breaks his word, commits an offence which——' The rest of this Joseph Surface sentiment was drowned in furious clamour, and for some minutes he could not make himself heard, until he drew some letters from his pocket, and held them up.

'Here is the correspondence,' he said. 'Does any gentleman here understand German? If so, will he oblige me by stepping forward?'

The Birmingham public were not strong in languages in those days, it would seem, for no gentleman stepped forward.

'Am I, then, left alone?' he exclaimed in tragic accents. 'Well, I will translate them for you.'

Here there was another uproar, out of which came two or three voices, 'No, no.' Like Buckingham, he chose to construe the two or three into 'a general acclaim.'

'Your commands shall be obeyed,' he said bowing, and pocketing the correspondence. 'I *will not* read them. But, my dear patrons, your kindness merits some satisfaction at my hands; your consideration shall not go unrewarded. You shall not say you have paid your money for nothing. Thank heaven, I can satisfy you of my own integrity, and present you with a portion of the entertainment you have paid to see. The Bohemian, the villain, is not here. But the *stone* is, and YOU SHALL SEE IT.' He winked at the orchestra, which struck up a lively strain, and up went the curtain, disclosing a huge piece of sand rock, upon which was stuck a label, bearing the legend in large letters, 'THIS IS THE STONE.'

It need scarcely be added that the Bohemian existed only in the manager's brain. But it is a question whether the audience which could be only brought together by such an exhibition did not deserve to be swindled.

An equally good story is told of his management at Worcester. For his benefit he had announced a grand display of fireworks! No greater proof of the gullibility of the British public could be adduced than their swallowing such an announcement. The theatre was so small that such an exhibition was practically impossible. A little before the night Elliston called upon the landlord of the property, and in the course of conversation hinted at the danger of such a display, as though the idea had just struck him; the landlord took alarm, and, as Elliston had anticipated, forbade it. Nevertheless the announcements remained on the walls, and on the night the theatre was crowded. The performance proceeded without any notice being taken by the management of the fireworks, until murmurs swelled into clamour and loud cries. Then, with his usual kingly air, Elliston came forward and bowed. He

had made, he said, the most elaborate preparation for a magnificent pyrotechnic display; he had left nothing undone, but at the last moment came the terrible reflection, would it not be dangerous? Would there not be collected within the walls of the theatre a number of lovely young tender girls, of respectable matrons, to do him honour? What if the house should catch fire—the panic, the struggle for life—ah, he shuddered at the thought! Then, too, he thought of the property of that worthiest of men, the landlord—he rushed to consult him—and he now called upon him—there he was, seated in the stage box—to publicly state, for the satisfaction of the distinguished audience he saw before him, that he had forbidden the performance from considerations of safety. The landlord, a very nervous man, shrank to the back of his box, scared by every eye in the house being fixed upon him; but the audience, thankful for the terrible danger they had escaped, burst into thunders of applause.

The stories are endless of the shifts and swindles to which country managers, at their wits' end, have had to resort to attract a sluggish public. How great singers have been advertised that never heard of such an engagement, and even forged telegrams read to an expectant audience, to account for their non-appearance. How prizes have been distributed on benefit nights—to people who gave them back again. How audiences, the victims of some false announcement, have been left waiting patiently for the performance to commence, while the manager was on his way to another town with their money in his pocket. But there is a great sameness about such stories, and one or two are a specimen of all.

H. BARTON BAKER.

The Return of the Native.

BY THOMAS HARDY.

BOOK V.—CHAPTER IX.

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS DRAW THE WANDERERS TOGETHER.

HAVING seen Eustacia's signal from the hill at eight o'clock, Wildeve immediately prepared to assist her in her flight. He was somewhat perturbed, and his manner of informing Thomasin that he was going on a journey was in itself sufficient to rouse her suspicions. When she had gone to bed he collected the few articles he would require, and went upstairs to the money-chest. Eustacia, he knew, could go nowhere without money, and, suspecting that the secrecy of her departure would prevent her being well-provided, he determined to hand over to her as much as he could spare. This was a tolerably bountiful sum in notes, which had been advanced to him on the property he was so soon to have in possession, to defray expenses incidental to the removal.

He then went to the stable and coach-house to personally assure himself that the horse, gig, and harness were in a fit condition for a long drive. Nearly half-an-hour was spent thus, and on returning to the house Wildeve had no thought of Thomasin being anywhere but in bed. He had told the stable-boy not to stay up, giving the boy to understand that his departure would be at three or four in the morning; for this, though an exceptional hour, was less strange than midnight, the time actually agreed on. Wildeve had thought of telling the whole story to his wife; but he feared its effect upon her, and resolved not to explain till forced to do so on his return, when all would be over; and the facts themselves, however peculiar, would testify that no scheme for a combined elopement had been afoot.

At last all was quiet, and he had nothing to do but to wait. By no effort could he shake off the oppression of spirits which he had experienced ever since his last meeting with Eustacia. There was that in his situation which money could not cure. He had persuaded himself that to act honestly towards his gentle wife, and chivalrously towards another woman, was not only possible but easy; he had resolved to regulate his conduct by canons of virtue, and blind himself to his sentiments for Eustacia in lending her assistance; but, even while he endeavoured, the spell that she had

cast over him intensified. To-night, though he meant to adhere to her instructions to the letter, to deposit her where she wished, and to leave her when she chose, his heart was beating fast in the anticipated pleasure of seeing her.

He would not allow himself to dwell long upon this contradiction of his maxims by his hopes, and at twenty minutes to twelve he again went softly to the stable, harnessed the horse, and lit the lamps; and, taking the horse by the head, led him with the covered car out of the yard to a spot by the roadside some forty or fifty paces below the inn.

Here Wildeve waited, slightly sheltered from the driving rain by a high bank that had been cast up at this place. Along the surface of the road, where, lit by the lamps, the loosened gravel and small stones scudded and clicked together before the wind, which, leaving them in heaps, plunged into the heath, and boomed across the bushes into darkness. Only one sound rose above this din of weather, and that was the roaring of a ten-hatch weir a few yards farther on, where the road approached the river which formed the boundary of the heath in this direction.

He lingered on in perfect stillness, till he began to fancy that the midnight hour must have struck. A very strong doubt had arisen in his mind if Eustacia would venture down the hill in such weather; yet, knowing her nature, he feared that she might persist. 'Poor thing! 'tis like her ill-luck,' he murmured.

At length he turned to the lamp and looked at his watch. To his surprise, it was nearly a quarter past midnight. He now wished that he had driven up the circuitous road to Mistover, a plan not adopted because of the enormous length of the route in proportion to that of the pedestrian's path down the open hill-side, and the consequent increase of labour for the horse.

At this moment a footstep approached; but the light of the lamps being in a different direction, the comer was not visible. The step paused, then came on again.

'Eustacia?' said Wildeve.

The person came forward, and the light fell upon the form of Clym, glistening with wet, whom Wildeve immediately recognised; but Wildeve, who stood behind the lamp, was not at once recognised by Yeobright.

He stopped as if in doubt whether this waiting vehicle could have anything to do with the flight of his wife or not. The sight of Yeobright at once banished Wildeve's sober feelings, who saw him again as the deadly rival from whom Eustacia was to be kept at all hazards. Hence Wildeve did not speak, in the hope that Clym would pass by without particular inquiry.

While they both hung thus in hesitation a dull sound became audible above the storm and wind. Its origin was unmistakable—it was the fall of a body into the stream adjoining, apparently at a point near the weir.

Both started. ‘Good God! can it be she?’ said Clym.

‘Why should it be she?’ said Wildeve, in his alarm forgetting that he had hitherto screened himself.

‘Ah!—that’s you, you traitor, is it?’ cried Yeobright. ‘Why should it be she? Because last week she would have put an end to her life if she had been able. She ought to have been watched! Take one of the lamps and come with me.’

Yeobright seized the one on his side, and hastened on; Wildeve did not wait to unfasten the other, but followed at once along the road to the weir, a little in the rear of Clym.

Shadwater Weir had at its foot a large circular pool, fifty feet in diameter, into which the water flowed through ten huge hatches, raised and lowered by a winch and cogs in the ordinary manner. The sides of the pool were of masonry, to prevent the water from washing away the bank; but the force of the stream in winter was sometimes such as to undermine the retaining wall, and precipitate it into the hole. Clym reached the hatches, the whole framework of which was shaken to its foundations by the velocity of the current. Nothing but the froth of the waves could be discerned in the pool below. He got upon the plank bridge over the race, and, holding to the rail that the wind might not blow him off, crossed to the other side of the river. There he leant over the wall and lowered the lamp, only to behold the vortex formed at the curl of the returning current.

Wildeve meanwhile had arrived on the other side, and the light from Yeobright’s lamp shed a flecked and agitated radiance across the weir-pool, revealing the tumbling courses of the currents from the hatches above. Across this gashed and puckered mirror a dark body was slowly borne by one of the backward currents.

‘O my darling!’ exclaimed Wildeve in an agonised voice; and without showing sufficient presence of mind even to throw off his great-coat, he leaped into the boiling hole.

Yeobright could now also discern the floating body, though but indistinctly; but imagining from Wildeve’s plunge that there was life to be saved, he was about to leap after. Suddenly bethinking himself of a wiser plan, he placed the lamp against a post to make it stand upright, and running round to the lower part of the pool, where there was no wall, he sprang in and boldly waded upwards towards the deeper portion. Here he was instantly taken

off his legs, and in swimming was carried round into the centre of the basin, where he perceived Wildevé already struggling.

While these hasty actions were in progress here, Venn and Thomasin had been toiling through the lower corner of the pool in the direction of the light. They had not been near enough to the river to hear the plunge, but they saw the removal of the carriage-lamp, and watched its motion down the road. As soon as they reached the car and horse, Venn guessed that something was amiss, and hastened to follow in the course of the moonlight. Venn walked faster than Thomasin, and came to the river alone.

The lamp placed against the post by Clym still shone above the water, and the reddleman observed something floating motionless. Being encumbered with the infant, he instantly ran to meet Thomasin.

'Take the baby, please, Mrs. Wildevé,' he said hastily. 'Run home with her, call the stable-lad, and make him send down to any men who may be living near. Somebody has fallen into the weir.'

Thomasin took the child and ran. When she came to the covered car, the horse, though fresh from the stable, was standing perfectly still, as if conscious of misfortune. She saw for the first time whose it was. She nearly fainted, and would have been unable to proceed another step but that the necessity of preserving the little girl from harm nerved her to an amazing self-control. In this agony of suspense she entered the house, put the baby in a place of safety, woke the lad and the female domestic, and ran to give the alarm at the nearest cottage.

Diggory having returned to the brink of the pool, observed that the small upper hatches or floats were withdrawn. He took one of these lying upon the grass, and taking it under one arm with his lantern in his hand, entered at the bottom of the pool where Clym had done. As soon as he began to be in deep water he pressed himself across the hatch, and thus supported was able to keep afloat as long as he chose, holding the lantern aloft with his disengaged hand. Propelled by his feet, he steered round the pool, ascending each time by one of the back streets and descending in the middle of the current.

At first he could see nothing. Then, amidst the glistening of the whirlpools and the white clots of foam, he distinguished a woman's bonnet floating alone. His search was now under the wall, when something came to the surface almost close beside him. It was not, as he had expected, a woman, but a man. The man put the ring of the lantern between his teeth, seized

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floating man by the collar, and, holding on to the hatch with his remaining arm, struck out into the strongest race, by which the unconscious man, the hatch, and himself, were carried with the speed of an arrow down the stream. As soon as Venn found his feet dragging over the pebbles of the shallower part below, he secured his footing and waded towards the brink. There, where the water stood at about the height of his waist, he flung away the hatch, and attempted to drag forth the man. This was a matter of great difficulty, and to his surprise he found as the reason that the legs of the unfortunate stranger were tightly embraced by the arms of another man, who had hitherto been entirely beneath the surface.

At this moment his heart bounded to hear footsteps running towards him, and two men, roused by Thomasin, appeared at the brink above. They ran to where Venn was, and helped him in lifting out the apparently drowned persons, separating them, and laying them out upon the grass. Venn turned the light upon their faces. The one who had been uppermost was Yeobright; he who had been completely submerged was Wildeve.

'Now we must search the hole again,' said Venn. 'A woman is in there somewhere. Get a pole.'

One of the men went to the foot-bridge and tore off the hand-rail. The reddleman and the two others then entered the water together from below as before, and with their united force probed the pool forwards to where it sloped down to its central depth. Venn was not mistaken in supposing that any person who had sunk for the last time would be washed down to this point, for when they had examined to about half-way across, something impeded their thrust.

'Pull it forward,' said Venn, and they raked it in with the pole till it was close to their feet.

Venn vanished under the stream, and came up with an armful of wet drapery enclosing a woman's cold form, which was all that remained of the desperate and unfortunate Eustacia.

When they reached the bank, there stood Thomasin, in an agony of grief, bending over the two unconscious ones who already lay there. The horse and car were brought to the nearest point in the road, and it was the work of a few minutes only to place the three in the vehicle. Venn led on the horse, supporting Thomasin upon his arm, and the two men followed, till they reached the inn.

The woman who had been shaken out of her sleep by Thomasin had hastily dressed herself and lighted a fire, the other servant being left to snore on in peace at the back of the house. The insensible forms of poor Eustacia, Clym, and Wildeve were then

brought in and laid on the carpet with their feet to the fire, when such restorative processes as could be thought of were adopted at once, the stableman being in the mean time sent for a doctor. But three seemed to be not a waft of life left in either of the unfortunates. Then Thomasin, whose stupor of grief had been thrust off awhile by frantic action, applied a bottle of hartshorn to Clym's nostrils, having tried it in vain upon the other two. He sighed.

'Clym's alive!' she exclaimed.

He soon breathed distinctly, and again and again did she attempt to revive her husband by the same means; but Wildeve gave no sign. There was too much reason to think that he and Eustacia both were for ever beyond the reach of stimulating perfumes. Their exertions did not relax till the doctor arrived, when, one by one, the senseless three were taken upstairs and put into warm beds.

Venn soon felt himself relieved from further attendance, and went to the door, scarcely able yet to realise the strange catastrophe that had befallen the family in which he took so great an interest. Thomasin surely would be broken down by the sudden and overwhelming nature of this event. No firm and sensible Mrs. Yeobright lived now to support the gentle girl through the ordeal; and whatever an unimpassioned spectator might think of her loss of such a husband as Wildeve, there could be no doubt that for the moment she was distracted and horrified by the blow. As for himself, not being privileged to go to her and comfort her, he saw no reason for waiting longer in a house where he remained only as a stranger.

He returned across the heath to his van. The fire was not yet out, and everything remained as he had left it. Venn now thought himself of his clothes, which were saturated with water to the weight of lead. He changed them, spread them before the fire, and lay down to sleep. But it was more than he could do to rest here while excited by a vivid imagination of the turmoil they were in at the house he had quitted, and, blaming himself for coming away, he dressed in another suit, locked up the door, and again hastened across to the inn. Rain was still falling heavily when he entered the kitchen. A bright fire was shining from the hearth, and two women were bustling about, one of whom was Olly Dowden.

'Well, how is it going on now?' said Venn in an anxious whisper.

'Mr. Yeobright is better; but Mrs. Yeobright and Mr. Wildeve are dead and cold. The doctor says they were quite gone before they were out of the water.'

‘Ah! I thought as much when I hauled ’em up. And Mrs. Wildeve?’

‘She is as well as can be expected. The doctor had her put between blankets, for she was almost as wet as they that had been in the river, poor young thing. You don’t seem very dry, reddleman.’

‘Oh, ’tis not much. I have changed my things. This is only a little dampness I’ve got coming through the rain again.’

‘Stand by the fire. Mis’ess says you be to have whatever you want, and she was sorry when she was told that you’d gone away.’

Venn drew near to the fireplace, and looked into the flames in an absent mood. The steam came from his leggings and ascended the chimney with the smoke, while he thought of those who were upstairs. Two were corpses, one had barely escaped the jaws of death, another was sick and a widow. The last occasion on which he had lingered by that fireplace was when the raffle was in progress; when Wildeve was alive and well, Thomasin active and smiling in the next room; Yeobright and Eustacia just made man and wife, and Mrs. Yeobright living at Blooms-End. It had seemed at that time that the then position of affairs was good for at least twenty years to come. Yet of all the circle he himself was the only one whose situation had not materially changed.

While he ruminated, a footstep descended the stairs. It was the nurse, who brought in her hand a rolled mass of wet paper. The woman was so engrossed with her occupation that she hardly saw Venn. She took from a cupboard some pieces of twine, which she strained across the fireplace, tying the end of each piece to the fire-dog previously pulled forward for the purpose, and, unrolling the wet papers, she began pinning them one by one to the strings in the manner of clothes on a line.

‘What be they?’ said Venn.

‘Poor master’s bank-notes,’ she answered. ‘They were found in his pocket when they undressed him.’

‘Then he was not coming back again for some time?’ said Venn.

‘That we shall never know,’ said she.

Venn was loth to depart, for all on earth that interested him lay under this roof. As nobody in the house had any more sleep that night, except the two who slept for ever, there was no reason why he should not remain. So he retired into the niche of the fireplace where he had used to sit, and there he continued, watching the steam from the double row of bank-notes as they waved backwards and forwards in the draught of the chimney till their flaccidity was changed to dry crispness throughout. Then the woman came and unpinned them, and, folding them together,

carried the handful upstairs. Presently the doctor appeared from above with the look of a man who could do no more, and, pulling on his gloves, went out of the house, the trotting of his horse soon dying away upon the road.

At four o'clock there was a gentle knock at the door. It was from Charley, who had been sent by Captain Drew to inquire if anything had been heard of Eustacia. The girl who admitted him looked in his face as if she did not know what answer to return, and showed him in to where Venn was seated, saying to the red-dleman, 'Will you tell him, please?'

Venn told. Charley's only utterance was a feeble, indistinct sound. He stood quite still: then he burst out spasmodically, 'I shall see her once more?'

'I dare say you may see her,' said Diggory gravely. 'But hadn't you better run and tell Captain Drew?'

'Yes, yes. Only, I do hope I shall see her just again.'

'You shall,' said a low voice behind; and starting round, they beheld by the dim light a thin, pallid, almost spectral form, wrapped in a blanket, and looking like Lazarus coming from the tomb.

It was Yeobright. Neither Venn nor Charley spoke, and Clym continued: 'You shall see her. There will be time enough to tell the Captain when it gets daylight. You would like to see her too—would you not, Diggory? She looks very beautiful now.'

Venn assented by rising to his feet, and with Charley he followed Clym to the foot of the staircase, where he took off his boots; Charley did the same. They followed Yeobright upstairs to the landing, where there was a candle burning, which Yeobright took in his hand, and with it led the way into an adjoining room. Here he went to the bedside, and folded back the sheet.

They stood silently looking upon Eustacia, who, as she lay there still in death, eclipsed all her living phases. Pallor did not include all the quality of her complexion, which seemed more than whiteness; it was almost light. The expression of her finely carved mouth was pleasant, as if a sense of dignity had just compelled her to leave off speaking. Eternal rigidity had seized upon it in a momentary transition between fervour and resignation. Her black hair was looser now than either of them had ever seen it before, and surrounded her brow like a forest. The stateliness of look which had been almost too marked for a dweller in a country domicile, had at last found an artistically happy background.

Nobody spoke, till at length Clym covered her and turned aside. 'Now come here,' he said.

They went to a recess in the same room, and there, on a smaller bed, lay another figure—Wildeve. Less repose was visible in his face than in Eustacia's, but the same luminous youthfulness overspread it, and the least sympathetic observer would have felt at sight of him now that he was born for a higher destiny than this. The only sign upon him of his recent struggle for life was in his finger-tips, which were worn and scarified to the bone in his dying endeavours to obtain a hold on the face of the weir-wall.

Yeobright's manner had been so quiet, he had uttered so few syllables since his reappearance, that Venn imagined him resigned. It was only when they had left the room, and stood upon the landing, that the true state of his mind was apparent. Here he said with a wild smile, inclining his head towards the chamber in which Eustacia lay: 'She is the second woman I have killed this year. I was a great cause of my mother's death; and I am the chief cause of hers.'

'How?' said Venn.

'I spoke cruel words to her, and she left my house. I did not invite her back till it was too late. It is I who ought to have drowned myself. It would have been a charity to the living had the river overwhelmed me and borne her up. But I cannot die. Those who ought to have lived lie dead; and here am I alive!'

'But you can't charge yourself with crimes in that way,' said Venn. 'You may as well say that the parents be the cause of a murder by the child, for without the parents the child would never have been begot.'

'Yes, Venn, that is very true; but you don't know all the circumstances. If it had pleased God to put an end to me, it would have been a good thing for all. But I am getting used to the horror of my existence. They say that a time comes when men laugh at misery through long acquaintance with it. Surely that time will soon come to me.'

'Your aim has always been good,' said Venn. 'Why should you say such desperate things?'

'No, they are not desperate. They are only hopeless; and my great regret is that for what I have done no man can punish me!'

BOOK SIXTH.

Shortly relates the gradual righting of affairs after the foregoing catastrophe, and how there resulted another general gathering at Blooms-End; with which, and a few other particulars, the story closes.

CHAPTER I.

THE INEVITABLE MOVEMENT ONWARD.

THE history of the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve was told throughout Egdon, and far beyond, for many weeks and months. All the known incidents of their love were enlarged, distorted, touched up, and modified, till the original reality bore but a slight resemblance to the counterfeit presentation by surrounding tongues. Whether Wildeve would have had sufficient ballast of character to return to Thomasin when once in Budmouth with Eustacia may be doubted; but when it was discovered that he had at least intended to return the next day, no allowance was made, and the fact was dismissed as not worthy of reiteration. Yet, upon the whole, neither the man nor the woman lost dignity by sudden death. Misfortune had struck them gracefully, cutting off their young histories with a catastrophic dash, instead of, as with many, attenuating each life to an uninteresting meagreness, through long years of wrinkles, neglect, and decay.

On those most nearly concerned the effect was somewhat different. Strangers who had heard of many such cases, now merely heard of one more; but immediately where a blow falls no previous imaginings amount to appreciable preparation for it. The very suddenness of her bereavement dulled, to some extent, Thomasin's feelings; yet, irrationally enough, a consciousness that the husband she had lost ought to have been a better man did not lessen her mourning at all. On the contrary, this fact seemed at first to set off the dead husband in his young wife's eyes, and to be the necessary cloud to the rainbow.

But the horrors of the unknown had passed. Vague misgivings about her future as a deserted wife were at an end. The worst had once been matter of trembling conjecture; it was now matter of reason only, a limited badness. Her chief interest, the little Eustacia, still remained. There was humility in her grief, no defiance in her attitude; and when this is the case, a shaken spirit is apt to be stilled.

Could Thomasin's mournfulness now and Eustacia's serenity during life have been reduced to common measure, they would have touched the same mark nearly. But Thomasin's former

brightness made shadow of that which in a sombre atmosphere was light itself.

The spring came and calmed her; the summer came and soothed her; the autumn arrived, and she began to be comforted, for her little girl was strong and happy, growing in size and knowledge every day. Outward events flattered Thomasin not a little. Wildeve had died intestate, and she and the child were his only relatives. When administration had been granted, all the debts paid, and the residue of her husband's uncle's property had come into her hands, it was found that the sum waiting to be invested for her own and the child's benefit was little less than nine thousand pounds.

Where should she live? The obvious place was Blooms-End. The old rooms, it is true, were not much higher than the between-decks of a frigate, necessitating a sinking in the floor under the new clock-case she brought from the inn, and the removal of the handsome brass knobs on its head, before there was height for it to stand in; but, such as the rooms were, there were plenty of them, and the place was endeared to her by every early recollection. Clym very gladly admitted her as a tenant, confining his own existence to two rooms at the top of the back staircase; where he lived on quietly, shut off from Thomasin and the two servants she had thought fit to indulge in now that she was a mistress of money, going his own ways, and thinking his own thoughts.

His sorrows had made some change in his outward appearance; and yet the alteration was chiefly within. It might have been said that he had a wrinkled mind. He had no enemies, and he could get nobody to reproach him, which was why he so bitterly reproached himself.

He did sometimes think he had been ill-used by fortune so far as to say that to be born is a palpable dilemma, and that instead of men aiming to advance with glory, they should calculate how to retreat without shame. But that he and his had been sarcastically and pitilessly handled in having such irons thrust into their souls he did not maintain long. It is usually so, except with the sternest of men. The placable human race, in its generous endeavour to construct an hypothesis that shall not degrade a first cause, has always hesitated to conceive a dominant power of lower moral quality than its own; and, even while it sits down and weeps by the waters of Babylon, invents excuses for the oppression which prompts its tears.

Thus, though words of solace were vainly uttered in his presence, he found relief in a direction of his own choosing when left to himself. For a man of his habits, the house and the hundred-

and-twenty pounds a year which he had inherited from his mother were enough to supply all worldly needs. Resources do not depend upon gross amounts, but upon the proportion of givings to takings.

He frequently walked the heath alone, when the past seized upon him with its shadowy hand, and held him there to listen to its tale. His imagination would then people the spot with its ancient inhabitants: forgotten Celtic tribes trod their tracks around him, and he could almost live among them, look in their faces, and see them standing beside the barrows which swelled around, untouched and perfect as at the time of their erection. Those of the dyed barbarians who had chosen the cultivable tracts were, in comparison with those who had left their marks here, as writers on paper beside writers on parchment. Their records had perished long ago by the plough, while the works of these remained. Yet they all had lived and died unconscious of the different fates awaiting their works. It reminded him that un conjectured factors operate in the production of immortality.

Winter again came round, with its winds, frosts, tame robins, and sparkling starlight. The year previous, Thomasin had hardly been conscious of the season's advance; this year she laid her heart open to external influences of every kind. The life of this sweet cousin, her baby, and her servants, came to Clym's senses only in the form of sounds through a wood partition as he sat over books of exceptionally large type; but his ear became at last so accustomed to these slight noises from the other part of the house, that he almost could witness the scenes they signified. A faint beat of half-seconds conjured up Thomasin rocking the cradle; a wavering hum meant that she was singing the baby to sleep; a crunching of sand as between millstones raised the picture of Humphrey's, Fairway's, or Sam's heavy feet crossing the stone floor of the kitchen; a light step, and a gay tune in a high key, betokened a visit from Grandfer Cattle; a sudden break-off in the Grandfer's utterances implied the application to his lips of a mug of small beer; a bustling and slamming of doors meant starting to go to market; for Thomasin, in spite of her added scope for gentility, led a ludicrously narrow life, to the end that she might save every possible pound for her little daughter.

One summer day Clym was in the garden, immediately outside the parlour window, which was as usual open. He was looking at the pot-flowers on the sill; they had been revived and restored by Thomasin to the state in which his mother had left them. He heard a slight scream from Thomasin, who was sitting inside the room.

'Oh, how you frightened me!' she said to some one who had entered. 'I thought you were the ghost of yourself.'

Clym was curious enough to advance a little farther and look in at the window. To his astonishment, there stood within the room Diggory Venn, no longer a reddleman, but exhibiting the strangely altered hues of an ordinary Christian countenance, white shirt-front, light flowered waistcoat, blue-spotted neckerchief, and bottle-green coat. Nothing in this appearance was at all singular but the fact of its great difference from what he had formerly been. Red, and all approaching red, was carefully excluded from every article of clothes upon him, for what is there that persons out of harness dread so much as reminders of the trade which has enriched them?

Yeobright went round to the door and entered.

'I was so alarmed,' said Thomasin, smiling from one to the other. 'I couldn't believe that he had got white of his own accord. It seemed supernatural.'

'I gave up dealing in redde last Christmas,' said Venn. 'It was a profitable trade, and I found that by that time I had made enough to take the large dairy of eighty cows that my father had in his lifetime. I always thought of getting to that place again if I changed at all; and now I am there.'

'How did you manage to become white, Diggory?' Thomasin asked.

'I turned so by degrees, ma'am.'

'You look much better than ever you did before.'

Venn appeared confused; and Thomasin, seeing how inadvertently she had spoken to a man who might possibly have tender feelings for her still, blushed a little. Clym saw nothing of this, and added good-humouredly:

'What shall we have to frighten Thomasin's baby with, now you have become a human being again?'

'Sit down, Diggory,' said Thomasin, 'and stay to tea.'

Venn moved as if he would retire to the kitchen, when Thomasin said with pleasant pertness, as she went on with some sewing: 'Of course you must sit down here. And where does your large eighty-cow dairy lie, Mr. Venn?'

'About two miles to the right of Alderworth, where the meads begin. I have thought that if Mr. Yeobright would like to pay me a visit sometimes he shouldn't stay away for want of asking. I'll not bide to tea this afternoon, thankye, for I've got something on hand that must be settled. 'Tis Maypole-day to-morrow, and the Shadwater folk have clubbed with a few of your neighbours here to have one just outside your palings in the heath, as it is a

nice green place.' Venn waved his elbow towards the patch in front of the house. 'I have been talking to Fairway about it,' he continued, 'and I said to him that before we put up the pole it would be as well to ask Mrs. Wildeve.'

'I can say nothing against it,' she answered. 'Our property does not reach an inch farther than the white palings.'

'But you might not like to see a lot of folk going crazy round a stick, under your very nose.'

'I shall have no objection at all.'

Venn soon after went away, and in the evening Yeobright strolled as far as Fairway's cottage. It was a lovely May sunset, and the birch-trees which grew on this margin of the vast Egdon wilderness had put on their new leaves, delicate as butterflies' wings, and diaphanous as amber. Beside Fairway's dwelling was an open space recessed from the road, and here were now collected all the young people from within a radius of a couple of miles. The pole lay with one end supported on a trestle, and women were engaged in wreathing it from the top downwards with wild flowers. The instincts of merry England lingered on here with exceptional vitality, and the symbolic customs which tradition has attached to each season of the year were yet a reality on Egdon. Indeed, the impulses of all such outlandish hamlets are Pagan still: in these spots homage to nature, self-adoration, frantic gaieties, fragments of Teutonic rites to divinities whose names are forgotten, have in some way or other survived mediæval doctrine.

Yeobright did not interrupt the preparations, and went home again. The next morning, when Thomasin withdrew the curtains of her bed-room window, there stood the maypole in the middle of the green, its top cutting into the sky. It had sprung up in the night, or rather early morning, like Jack's bean-stalk. She opened the casement to get a better view of the garlands and posies that adorned it. The sweet perfume of the flowers had already spread into the surrounding air, which, being free from every taint, conducted to her lips a full measure of the fragrance received from the spire of blossom in its midst. At the top of the pole were crossed hoops decked with small flowers; beneath these came a milk-white zone of may-bloom; then a zone of blue-bells, then of cowslips, then of lilacs, then of ragged-robins, daffodils, and so on, till the lowest stage was reached. Thomasin noticed all these, and was delighted that the May-revel was to be so near.

When afternoon came, people began to gather on the green, and Yeobright was interested enough to look out upon them from

the open window of his room. Soon after this Thomasin walked out from the door immediately below, and turned her eyes up to her cousin's face. She was dressed more gaily than Yeobright had ever seen her dress since the time of Wildeve's death eighteen months before; since the day of her marriage even she had not exhibited herself to such advantage.

'How pretty you look to-day, Thomasin!' said Clym. 'Is it because of the maypole?'

'Not altogether.' And then she blushed and dropped her eyes, which he did not specially observe, though her manner seemed to him to be rather peculiar, considering that she was only addressing himself. Could it be possible that she had put on her summer clothes to please him?

He recalled her conduct towards him throughout the last few weeks, when they had often been working together in the garden, just as they had formerly done when they were boy and girl under his mother's eye. What if her interest in him were not so entirely that of a relative as it had formerly been? To Yeobright any possibility of this sort was a serious matter; and he almost felt troubled at thought of it. Every pulse of lover-like feeling which had not been stilled during Eustacia's lifetime had gone into the grave with her. His passion for her had occurred too far on in his manhood to leave fuel enough on hand for another fire of that sort, as may happen with more boyish loves. Even supposing him capable of loving again, that love would be a plant of slow and laboured growth, and in the end only small and sickly, like an autumn-hatched bird.

He was so distressed by this new complexity, that when the enthusiastic brass band arrived and struck up, which it did about five o'clock, with apparently wind enough among its members to blow down his house, he withdrew from his rooms by the back door, went down the garden, through the gate in the Privet hedge, and away out of sight. He could not bear to remain in the presence of enjoyment to-day, though he had tried hard.

Nothing was seen of him for four hours. When he came back by the same path it was dusk, and the dews were coating every green thing. The boisterous music had ceased; but, entering the premises as he did from behind, he could not see if the May party had all gone till he had passed through Thomasin's division of the house to the front door. Thomasin was standing within the porch alone.

She looked at him reproachfully. 'You went away just when it began, Clym,' she said.

'Yes. I felt I could not join in. You went out with them, of course?'

'No, I did not.'

'You appeared to be dressed on purpose?'

'Yes, but I could not go out alone; so many people were there. One is there now.'

Yeobright strained his eyes across the dark green patch beyond the paling, and near the black form of the maypole he discerned a shadowy figure, sauntering idly up and down. 'Who is it?' he said.

'Mr. Venn,' said Thomasin.

'You might have asked him to come in, I think, Tamsie. He has been very kind to you first and last.'

'I will now,' she said; and acting on the impulse, she went through the wicket to where Venn stood under the maypole.

'It is Mr. Venn, I think?' she inquired.

Venn started as if he had not seen her—artful man that he was—and said, 'Yes.'

'Will you come in?'

'I am afraid that I——'

'I have seen you dancing this evening, and you had the very best of the girls for your partners. Is it that you won't come in because you wish to stand here, and think over the past hours of enjoyment?'

'Well, that's partly it,' said Mr. Venn with ostentatious sentiment. 'But the main reason why I am biding here like this is that I want to wait till the moon rises.'

'To see how pretty the maypole looks in the moonlight?'

'No. To look for a glove that was dropped by one of the maidens.'

Thomasin was speechless with surprise. That a man who had to walk some four or five miles to his home should wait here for such a reason pointed to only one conclusion: the man must be amazingly interested in that glove's owner.

'Were you dancing with her, Diggory?' she asked in a voice which revealed that he had made himself considerably more interesting to her by this disclosure.

'No,' he sighed.

'And you will not come in, then?'

'Not to-night, thank you, ma'am.'

'Shall I lend you a lantern to look for the young person's glove, Mr. Venn?'

'Oh no, it is not necessary, Mrs. Wildeve, thank you. The moon will rise in a few minutes.'

Thomasin went back to the porch. 'Is he coming in?' said Clym, who had been waiting where she had left him.

'He would rather not to-night,' she said, and then passed by him into the house, whereupon Clym too retired to his own rooms.

When Clym was gone, Thomasin crept upstairs in the dark, and, just listening by the cot to assure herself that the child was asleep, she went to the window, gently lifted the corner of the white curtain, and looked out. Venn was still there. She watched the growth of the faint radiance appearing in the sky by the eastern hill, till presently the edge of the moon burst upwards and flooded the valley with light. Diggory's form was now distinct on the green; he was moving about in a bowed attitude, evidently scanning the grass for the precious missing article, walking in zigzags right and left till he should have passed over every foot of the ground.

'How very ridiculous!' Thomasin murmured to herself in a tone which was intended to be satirical. 'To think that a man should be so silly as to go mooning about like that for a girl's glove. A respectable dairy-man, too, and a man of money as he is now. What a pity!'

At last Venn appeared to find it; whereupon he stood up and raised it to his lips. Then placing it in his breast-pocket—the nearest receptacle to a man's heart permitted by modern raiment—he ascended the valley in a mathematically direct line towards his distant home in the meadows.

CHAPTER II.

THOMASIN WALKS IN A GREEN PLACE BY THE ROMAN ROAD.

CLYM saw little of Thomasin for several days after this; and when they met she was more silent than usual. At length he asked her what she was thinking of so intently.

'I am thoroughly perplexed,' she said candidly. 'I cannot for my life think who it is that Diggory Venn is so much in love with. None of the girls at the maypole were good enough for him, and yet she must ha' been there.'

Clym tried to imagine Venn's choice for a moment; but ceasing to be interested in the question, he went on again with his gardening.

No clearing up of the mystery was granted her for some time. But one afternoon Thomasin was upstairs getting ready for a walk, when she had occasion to come to the landing and call 'Rachel'

Rachel was a girl about thirteen who carried the baby out for airings; and she came upstairs at the call.

‘Have you seen one of my last new gloves about the house, Rachel?’ inquired Thomasin. ‘It is the fellow to this one.’

Rachel did not reply.

‘Why don’t you answer?’ said her mistress.

‘I think it is lost, ma’am.’

‘Lost? who lost it? I have never worn them but once.’

Rachel appeared as one dreadfully troubled, and at last began to cry. ‘Please, ma’am, on the day of the maypole I had nene to wear, and I seed yours on the table, and I thought I would borrow ’em. I did not mean to hurt ’em at all, but one of them got lost. Somebody gave me some money to buy another pair for you, but I have not been able to go anywhere to get ’em.’

‘Who’s somebody?’

‘Mr. Venn.’

‘Did he know it was my glove?’

‘Yes. I told him.’

Thomasin was so surprised by the explanation that she quite forgot to lecture the girl, who glided silently away. Thomasin did not move farther than to turn her eyes upon the grass-plot where the maypole had stood. She remained thinking, then said to herself that she would not go out that afternoon, but would work hard at the baby’s unfinished lovely plaid frock, cut on the cross in the newest fashion. How she managed to work hard, and yet do no more than she had done at the end of two hours, would have been a mystery to any one not aware that the recent incident was of a kind likely to divert her industry from a manual to a mental channel.

Next day she went her ways as usual, and continued her custom of walking in the heath with no other companion than little Eustacia, now of the age when it is a matter of doubt with such characters whether they are intended to walk through the world on their hands or on their feet, and so they get into painful complications by trying both. It was very pleasant to Thomasin, when she had carried the child to some lonely place, to give her a little private practice on the green turf and shepherd’s thyme, which formed a soft mat to fall headlong upon when equilibrium was lost.

Once, when engaged in this system of training, and stooping to remove bits of stick, fern-stalks, and other such fragments from the child’s path, that the journey might not be brought to an untimely end by some insuperable barrier a quarter of an inch high, she was alarmed by discovering that a man on horseback was

almost close beside her, the soft natural carpet having muffled the horse's tread. The rider, who was Venn, waved his hat in the air and bowed gallantly.

'Diggory, give me my glove,' said Thomasin, whose manner it was under any circumstances to plunge into the midst of a subject which engrossed her.

Venn immediately dismounted, put his hand into his breast-pocket, and handed the glove.

'Thank you. It was very good of you to take care of it.'

'It was very good of you to let me.'

'Oh no. I was quite glad to find you had it. Everybody gets so indifferent, that I was surprised to know you thought of me.'

'If you had remembered what I was once, you wouldn't have been surprised.'

'Ah, no,' she said quickly. 'But men of your character are mostly so independent.'

'What is my character?' he asked.

'I don't exactly know,' said Thomasin simply, 'except it is to cover up your feelings under a practical manner, and only to show them when you are alone.'

'Ah, how do you know that?' said Venn strategically.

'Because,' said she—stopping to put the little girl, who had managed to get herself upside down, right end up again—'because I do.'

'You mustn't judge by folks in general,' said Venn. 'Still, I don't know much what feelings are nowadays. I have got so mixed up with business of one sort and t'other, that my soft sentiments are gone off in vapour like. Yes, I am given up body and soul to the making of money. Money is all my dream.'

'O Diggory, how wicked!' said Thomasin reproachfully, and looking at him in exact balance between taking his words seriously and judging them said to tease her.

'Yes, 'tis rather a rum course,' said Venn in the bland tone of one comfortably resigned to sins he could no longer overcome.

'You who used to be so nice!'

'Well, that's an argument I rather like, because what a man has once been he may be again.' Thomasin blushed. 'Except that it is rather harder now,' Venn continued.

'Why?' she asked.

'Because you be richer than you were at that time.'

'Oh no—not much. I have made it nearly all over to the baby, as it was my duty to do, except just enough to live on.'

'I am rather glad of that,' said Venn softly, and regarding her from the corner of his eye, 'for it makes it easier for us to be friendly.'

Thomasin blushed again, and, when a few more words had been said of a not unpleasing kind, Venn mounted his horse and rode on.

This conversation had passed in a hollow of the heath near the old Roman road ; a place much frequented by Thomasin. And it might have been observed that she did not in future walk that way less often from having met Venn there now. Whether or not Venn abstained from riding thither because he had met Thomasin in the same place might easily have been guessed from her proceedings about two months later in the same year.

CHAPTER III.

THE SERIOUS DISCOURSE OF CLYM WITH HIS COUSIN.

THROUGHOUT this period Yeobright had more or less pondered on his duty to his cousin Thomasin. He could not help feeling that it would be a pitiful waste of sweet material if the tender-natured thing should be doomed from this early stage of her life onwards to dribble away her winsome qualities on lonely gorse and fern. But he felt this as an economist merely, and not as a lover. His passion for Eustacia had been a sort of conserve of his whole life, and he had nothing more of that supreme quality left to bestow. So far the obvious thing was not to entertain any idea of marriage with Thomasin, even to oblige her.

But this was not all. Years ago there had been in his mother's mind a great fancy about Thomasin, and himself. It had not positively amounted to a desire, but it had always been a favourite dream. That they should be man and wife in good time, if the happiness of neither were endangered thereby, was the fancy in question. So that, what course save one was there now left for any son who revered his mother's memory as Yeobright did ? It is an unfortunate fact that any particular whim of parents, which might have been dispersed by half-an-hour's conversation during their lives, becomes sublimated by their deaths into a fiat the most absolute, with such results to conscientious children as those parents, had they lived, would have been the first to decry.

Had only Yeobright's own future been involved, he would have proposed to Thomasin with a ready heart. He had nothing to lose by carrying out a dead mother's hope. But he dreaded to contemplate Thomasin wedded to the mere corpse of a lover that he now felt himself to be. He had but three activities alive in him. One was his almost daily walk to the little graveyard wherein his mother lay ; another, his just as frequent visits by night to the

more distant enclosure which numbered Eustacia among its dead ; the third was self-preparation for a vocation which alone seemed likely to satisfy his cravings—that of an itinerant preacher of the eleventh commandment. It was difficult to believe that Thomasin would be cheered by a husband with such tendencies as these.

Yet he resolved to ask her, and let her decide for herself. It was even with a pleasant sense of doing his duty that he went downstairs to her one evening for this purpose, when the sun was sending up the valley the same long shadow of the housetop that he had seen lying there times out of number while his mother lived.

Thomasin was not in her room, and he found her in the front garden. ‘I have long been wanting, Thomasin,’ he began, ‘to say something about a matter that concerns both our futures.’

‘And you are going to say it now?’ she remarked quickly, colouring as she met his gaze. ‘Do stop a minute, Clym, and let me speak first, for, oddly enough, I have been wanting to say something to you.’

‘By all means say on, Tamsie.’

‘I suppose nobody can overhear us?’ she went on, casting her eyes around and lowering her voice. ‘Well, first you will promise me this—that you won’t be angry and call me anything harsh if you disagree with what I propose?’

Yeobright promised, and she continued: ‘What I want is your advice, for you are my relation—I mean, a sort of guardian to me—aren’t you, Clym?’

‘Well, yes, I suppose I am;—a sort of guardian. In fact, I am, of course,’ he said, altogether perplexed as to her drift.

‘I am thinking of marrying,’ she then observed blandly. ‘But I shall not marry unless you assure me that you approve of such a step. Why don’t you speak?’

‘I was taken rather by surprise. But, nevertheless, I am very glad to hear such news. I shall approve, of course, dear Tamsie. Who can it be? I am quite at a loss to guess. No, I am not—’tis the old doctor!—not that I mean to call him old, for he is not very old, after all. Ah—I noticed when he attended you last time!’

‘No, no,’ she said hastily. ‘’Tis Mr. Venn.’

Clym’s face suddenly became grave.

‘There, now, you don’t like him, and I wish I hadn’t mentioned him,’ she exclaimed almost petulantly. ‘And I shouldn’t have done it, either, only he keeps on bothering me so till I don’t know what to do!’

Clym looked out of the window. ‘I like Venn well enough,

he answered at last. 'He is a very honest and at the same time astute man. He is clever too, as is proved by his having got you to favour him. But really, Thomasin, he is not quite——'

'Gentleman enough for me. That is just what I feel. I am sorry now that I asked you, and I won't think any more of him. At the same time, I must marry him if I marry anybody, that I *will* say.'

'I don't see that,' said Clym, carefully concealing every clue to his own interrupted intention, which she plainly had not guessed. 'You might marry a professional man, or somebody of that sort by going into the town to live, and forming acquaintances there.'

'I am not fit for town life—so very rural and silly as I always have been. Do not you yourself notice my countrified ways?'

'Well, when I came home from Paris I did, a little; but I don't now.'

'That's because you have got countrified too. Oh, I couldn't live in a street, for the world! Egdon is a ridiculous old place, but I have got used to it, and I couldn't be happy anywhere else at all.'

'Neither could I,' said Clym.

'Then, how could you say that I should marry some town man? I am sure, say what you will, that I must marry Diggory if I marry at all. He has been kinder to me than anybody else, and he has helped me in many ways that I don't know of.' Thomasin almost pouted now.

'Yes, he has,' said Clym in a neutral tone. 'Well, I wish with all my heart that I could say, marry him. But I cannot forget what my mother thought on that matter, and it goes rather against me not to respect her opinion. There is too much reason why we should do the little we can to respect it now.'

'Very well, then,' sighed Thomasin. 'I will say no more.'

'But you are not bound to obey my wishes. I merely say what I think.'

'Oh no—I don't want to be rebellious in that way,' she said sadly. 'I had no business to think of him—I ought to have thought of my family. What dreadfully bad impulses there are in me!' Her lip trembled, and she turned away to hide a tear.

Clym, though vexed at what seemed her unaccountable taste, was in a measure relieved to find that at any rate the marriage question in relation to himself was shelved. Through several succeeding days he saw her at different times from the window of his room, moping disconsolately about the garden. He was half angry with her for choosing Venn; then he was grieved at having put himself in the way of Venn's happiness, who was, after all, a

honest and persevering a young fellow as any on Egdon, since he had turned over a new leaf. In short, Clym did not know what to do.

When next they met she said abruptly: 'He is much more respectable now than he was then!'

'Who?—oh, yes, Diggory Venn.'

'Aunt only objected because he was a reddleman.'

'Well, Thomasin, perhaps I don't know all the particulars of my mother's wish. So you had better use your own discretion.'

'You will always feel that I slighted your mother's memory.'

'No, I will not. I shall think you are convinced that, had she seen Diggory in his present position, she would have considered him a fitting husband for you. Now, that's my real feeling. Don't consult me any more, but do as you like, Thomasin. I shall be content.'

It is to be presumed that Thomasin was convinced; for a few days after this, when Clym strayed into a part of the heath he had not lately visited, Humphrey, who was at work there, said to him: 'I am glad to see that Mrs. Wildeva and Venn have made it up again, seemingly.'

'Have they?' said Clym abstractedly.

'Yes; and he do contrive to stumble upon her whenever she walks out on fine days with the chiel. But, Mr. Yeobright, I can't help feeling that your cousin ought to have married you. 'Tis a pity to make two chimley-corners where there need be only one. You could get her away from him now, 'tis my belief, if you were only to set about it.'

'How can I have the conscience to marry after having driven two women to their deaths? Don't think such a thing, Humphrey. After my experience, I should consider it too much of a burlesque to go to church and take a wife. In the words of Job, "I have made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"'

'No, Mr. Clym; don't fancy that about driving two women to their deaths. You shouldn't say it.'

'Well, we'll leave that out,' said Yeobright. 'But anyhow the times have set a mark upon me which wouldn't look well in a love-making scene. I have two ideas in my head, and no others. I am going to keep a night-school; and I am going to turn preacher. What have you got to say to that, Humphrey?'

'I'll come and hear ye with all my heart.'

'Thanks. 'Tis all I wish.'

As Clym descended into the valley, Thomasin came down by the other path, and met him at the gate. 'What do you think I

have to tell you, Clym?' she said, looking archly over her shoulder at him.

'I can guess,' he replied.

She scrutinised his face. 'Yes, you guess right. It is going to be, after all. He thinks I may as well make up my mind, and I have got to think so too. It is to be on the twenty-fifth of next month, if you don't object.'

'Do what you think right, dear. I am only too glad that you see your way clear to happiness again. My sex owes you every amends for the treatment you received in days gone by.'

CHAPTER IV.

HUMAN CHEERFULNESS AGAIN ASSERTS ITSELF AT BLOOMS-END, AND CLYM FINDS HIS VOCATION.

ANYBODY who had passed through Blooms-End about eleven o'clock on the morning fixed for the wedding, would have found that, while Yeobright's house was comparatively quiet, sounds denoting great activity came from the dwelling of his nearest neighbour, Timothy Fairway. It was chiefly a noise of feet, briskly crunching hither and thither over the sanded floor within. One man only was visible outside, and he seemed to be later at an appointment than he had intended to be, for he hastened up to the door, lifted the latch, and walked in without ceremony.

The scene within was not quite the customary one. Standing about the room was the little knot of men who formed the chief part of the Egdon coterie, there being present Fairway himself, Grandfer Cante, Humphrey, Christian, and Sam the turf-cutter. It was a warm day, and the men were as a matter of course in their shirt-sleeves, except Christian, who had always a nervous fear of parting with a scrap of his clothing when in anybody's house but his own. Across the stout oak table in the middle of the room was thrown a mass of striped linen, which Grandfer Cante held down on one side, and Humphrey on the other, while Fairway rubbed its surface with a yellow lump, his face being damp and creased with the effort of the labour.

'Waxing a bed-tick, souls?' said the new-comer.

'Yes, Sam,' said Grandfer Cante, as a man too busy to waste words. 'Shall I stretch this corner a shade tighter, Timothy?'

Fairway replied, and the waxing went on with unabated vigour. 'Tis going to be a good bed, by the look o't,' continued Sam, after an interval of silence. 'Who may it be for?'

'Tis a present for the new folks that's going to set up house-

keeping,' said Christian, who stood helpless and overcome by the majesty of the proceedings.

'Ah, to be sure; and a valuable one, 'a b'lieve.'

'Beds be dear to fokes that don't keep geese, baint they, Mister Fairway?' said Christian, as to an omniscient being.

'Yes,' said Fairway, standing up, giving his forehead a thorough mopping, and handing the bees-wax to Humphrey, who succeeded at the rubbing forthwith. 'Not that this couple be in want of one, but 'twas well to show 'em a bit of friendliness at this great racketing vagary of their lives. I set up both my own daughters in one when they were married, and there have been feathers enough for another in the house the last twelve months. Now then, neighbours, I think we have laid on enough wax. Grandfer Cantle, you turn the tick the right way outwards, and then I'll begin to shake in the feathers.'

When the bed was in proper trim, Fairway and Christian brought forward vast paper bags, stuffed to the full, but light as balloons, and began to turn the contents of each into the receptacle just prepared. As bag after bag was emptied, airy tufts of down and feathers floated about the room in increasing quantity till, through a mishap of Christian's, who shook the contents of one bag outside the tick, the atmosphere of the room became dense with gigantic flakes, which descended upon the workers like a windless snow-storm.

'I never see such a clumsy chap as you, Christian,' said Grandfer Cantle severely. 'You might have been the son of a man that's never been outside Blooms-End in his life for all the wit you have. Really, all the soldiering and smartness in the world in the father seems to count for nothing in forming the nater of the son. As far as that chiel Christian is concerned, I might as well have stayed at home and seed nothing like all the rest of ye here. Though, as far as myself is concerned, a dashing spirit has counted for sommat, to be sure.'

'Don't ye let me down so, father; I feel no bigger than a ninepin after it! I've made but a bruckle hit, I'm afeard.'

'Come, come! Never pitch yerself in such a low key as that, Christian; you should try more,' said Fairway.

'Yes, you should try more,' echoed the Grandfer with insistence, as if he had been the first to make the suggestion. 'In common conscience, every man ought either to marry or go a soldier. 'Tis a scandal to the nation to do neither one nor t'other. I did both, thank God. Neither to raise men nor to lay 'em low—that shows a poor do-nothing spirit indeed.'

'I never had the nerve to stand fire,' faltered Christian. 'But

as to marrying, I own I've asked here and there, though 'ithout much fruit from it. Yes, there's some house or other that might have had a man for a master—such as he is—that's now ruled by a woman alone. Still, it might have been awkward if I had found her out; for, d'ye see, neighbours, there'd have been nobody left at home to keep down father's spirits to the decent pitch that becomes a old man.'

'And you've your work cut out to do that, my son,' said Grandfer Cattle smartly. 'I wish that the dread of infirmities was not so strong in me!—I'd start the very first thing to-morrow to see the world over again. But seventy-one, though nothing at home, is a high figure for a rover. . . . Ay, seventy-one last Candlemas-day. Gad, I'd sooner have it in guineas than in years!' And the old man sighed.

'Don't ye be mournful, Grandfer,' said Fairway. 'Empt some more feathers into the bed-tick, and keep up yer heart. Though rather lean in the stalks, you be a green-leaved old man still. There's time enough left to ye yet to fill whole chronicles.'

'Begad, I'll go to 'em, Timothy—to the married pair!' said Grandfer Cattle in an encouraged voice, and starting round briskly. 'I'll go to 'em to-night, and sing a wedding-song, hey? 'Tis like me to do so, you know; and they'd see it as such. My "Down in Cupid's Gardens" was well liked in 'four; still, I've got others as good, and even better. What do ye say to my

She cal'-led to' her love'
From the lat'-tice a-bove',
'O come in' from the fog'-gy fog'-gy dew'.

'Twould please 'em well at such a time! Really, now I come to think of it, I haven't turned my tongue in my head to the shape of a real good song since Old Midsummer night, when we had the "Barley Mow" at the "Woman;" and 'tis a pity to neglect your strong point where there's few that have the compass for such things!'

'So 'tis, so 'tis,' said Fairway. 'Now gie the bed a shake down. We've put in seventy pound of best feathers, and I think that's as many as the tick will fairly hold. A bit and a drap wouldn't be amiss now, I reckon. Christian, maul down the virtuals from corner-cupboard if canst reach, man; and I'll draw a drap o' sommat to wet it with.'

They sat down to a lunch in the midst of their work, feathers around, above, and below them; the original owners of which occasionally looked in at the open door and cackled begrudgingly at sight of such a quantity of their old clothes.

'Upon my soul I shall be chokt,' said Fairway when, having extracted a feather from his mouth, he found several others floating on the mug as it was handed round.

'I've swallered several; and one had a tolerable quill,' said Sam placidly from the corner.

'Hullo—what's that—wheels I hear coming?' Grandfer Cattle exclaimed, jumping up and hastening to the door. 'Why, 'tis they back again: I didn't expect 'em yet this half-hour. To be sure, how quick marrying can be done when you are in the mind for't!'

'Oh yes, it can soon be *done*,' said Fairway, as if something should be added to make the statement complete.

He arose and followed the Grandfer, and the rest also went to the door. In a moment an open fly was driven past, in which sat Venn and Mrs. Venn, Yeobright, and a grand relative of Venn's who had come from Budmouth for the occasion. The fly had been hired at the nearest town, regardless of distance and cost, there being nothing on Egdon Heath, in Venn's opinion, dignified enough for such an event when such a woman as Thomasin was the bride; and the church was too remote for a walking bridal-party.

As the fly passed, the group which had run out from the home-
stead shouted 'Hurrah!' and waved their hands, feathers and down floating from their hair, their sleeves, and the folds of their garments at every motion, and Grandfer Cattle's seals dancing merrily in the sunlight as he twirled himself about. The driver of the fly turned a supercilious gaze upon them; he even treated the wedded pair themselves with something of condescension; for in what other state than heathen could people rich or poor exist, who were doomed to abide in such a world's-end as Egdon? Thomasin showed no such superiority to the group at the door, fluttering her hand as quickly as a bird's wing towards them, and asking Diggory, with tears in her eyes, if they ought not to alight and speak to these kind neighbours. Venn, however, suggested that, as they were all coming to the house in the evening, this was hardly necessary.

After this excitement the saluting party returned to their occupation, and the stuffing and sewing was soon afterwards finished, when Fairway harnessed a horse, wrapped up the cumbersome present, and drove off with it in the cart to Venn's house at North Shadwater.

Yeobright, having filled the office at the wedding-service which naturally fell to his hands, and afterwards returned to the house with the husband and wife, was indisposed to take part in the

feasting and dancing which wound up the evening. Thomasin was disappointed.

‘I wish I could be there without dashing your spirits,’ he said
 ‘But I might be too much like the skull at the banquet.’

‘No, no.’

‘Well, dear, apart from that, if you would excuse me, I should be glad. I know it seems unkind; but, dear Thomasin, I fear should not be happy in the company—there, that’s the truth of it. I shall always be coming to see you at your new home, you know so that my absence now will not much matter.’

‘Then I give in. Do whatever will be most comfortable to yourself.’

Clym retired to his lodging at the house-top much relieved and occupied himself during the afternoon in noting down the heads of a sermon, with which he intended to initiate all the really seemed practicable of the scheme that had originally brought him hither, and that he had so long kept in view under various modifications, through evil and good report. He had tested and weighed his convictions again and again, and saw no reason to alter them, though he had considerably lessened his plan. His eyesight, by long humouring in his native air, had grown stronger, but not sufficiently strong to warrant his attempting his extensive educational project. Yet he did not repine there was still more than enough of an unambitious sort to take all his energies, and occupy all his hours.

Evening drew on, and sounds of life and movement in the lower part of the domicile became more pronounced, the gate and the palings clicking incessantly. The party was to be an early one, and all the guests were assembled long before it was dark. Yeobright went down the back staircase and into the heath by another path than that in front, intending to walk in the open air till the party was over, when he would return to wish Thomasin and her husband good-bye as they departed. His steps were insensibly bent towards Mistover, by the path that he had followed on that terrible morning when he learnt the strange news from Susan’s boy.

He did not turn aside to the cottage, but pushed on to a eminence, whence he could see over the whole quarter that had once been Eustacia’s home. While he stood observing the darkening scene, somebody came up. Clym, seeing him but dimly, would have let him pass by silently, had not the pedestrian, who was Charley, recognised the young man and spoken to him.

‘Charley, I have not seen you for a length of time,’ said Yeobright. ‘Do you often walk this way?’

‘No,’ the lad replied. ‘I don’t often come outside the bank.’

‘You were not at the maypole?’

‘No,’ said Charley, in the same listless tone. ‘I don’t care for that sort of thing now.’

‘You rather liked Miss Eustacia, didn’t you?’ Yeobright gently asked. Eustacia had frequently told him of Charley’s romantic attachment.

‘Yes, very much. Ah, I wish——’

‘Yes?’

‘I wish, Mr. Yeobright, you could give me something to keep that once belonged to her—if you don’t mind.’

‘I shall be very happy to. It will give me very great pleasure, Charley. Let me think what I have of hers that you would like. But come with me to the house, and I’ll see.’

They walked towards Blooms-End together. When they reached the front it was dark, and the shutters were closed, so that nothing of the interior could be seen.

‘Come round this way,’ said Clym. ‘My entrance is at the back for the present.’

The two went round and ascended the crooked stair in darkness till Clym’s sitting-room on the upper floor was reached, where he lit a candle, Charley entering gently behind. Yeobright searched his desk, and, taking out a sheet of tissue-paper, unfolded from it two or three undulating locks of raven hair, which fell over the paper like black streams. From these he selected one, wrapped it up and gave it to the lad, whose eyes had filled with tears. He kissed the packet, put it in his pocket, and said in a voice of emotion, ‘Oh, Mr. Clym; how good you are to me!’

‘I will go a little way with you,’ said Clym. And amid the noise of merriment from below they descended. Their path to the front led them close to a little side window, whence the rays of candles streamed across the shrubs. The window, being screened from general observation by the bushes, had been left unblinded, so that a person in this private nook could see all that was going on within the room which contained the wedding guests, except in so far as vision was hindered by the green antiquity of the panes.

‘Charley, what are they doing?’ said Clym. ‘My sight is weaker again to-night, and the glass of this window is not good.’

Charley wiped his own eyes, which were rather blurred with moisture, and stepped closer to the casement. ‘Mr. Venn is asking Christian Cantle to sing,’ he replied; ‘and Christian is moving about in his chair as if he were much frightened at the question, and his father has struck up a stave instead of him.’

'Yes, I can hear the old man's voice,' said Clym. 'So there to be no dancing, I suppose. And is Thomasin in the room? I see something moving in front of the candles that resembles his shape, I think.'

'Yes. She do seem happy. She is red in the face and laughing at something Fairway has said to her. Oh, my!'

'What noise was that?' said Clym.

'Mr. Venn is so tall that he has knocked his head against the beam in gieing a skip as he passed under. Mrs. Venn hev run up quite frightened, and now she's put her hand to his head to feel if there's a lump. And now they be all laughing again as if nothing had happened.'

'Do any of them seem to care about my not being there?' Clym asked.

'No—not a bit in the world. Now they are all holding up their glasses and drinking somebody's health.'

'I wonder if it is mine?'

'No, 'tis Mr. and Mrs. Venn's, because he is making a heart sort of speech. There—now Mrs. Venn has got up, and is going away to put on her things, I think.'

'Well, they haven't concerned themselves about me, and it is quite right they should not. It is all as it should be, and Thomasin at least is happy. We will not stay any longer now, as they will soon be coming out to go home.'

He accompanied the lad into the heath on his way home, and returning alone to the house a quarter of an hour later, found Venn and Thomasin ready to start, all the guests having departed in his absence. The wedded pair took their seats in the four-wheeled dog-cart which Venn's head milker and handy man had driven from Shadwater to fetch them in; little Eustacia and the nurse were packed securely upon the opened flap behind; and the milk-pony, on an ancient overstepping pony whose shoes clashed like cymbals at every tread, rode in the rear, in the manner of a body-servant of the last century.

'Now we leave you in absolute possession of your own home again,' said Thomasin, as she bent down to wish her cousin good-night. 'It will be rather lonely for you, Clym, after the hubbub we have been making.'

'Oh, that's no inconvenience,' said Clym, smiling rather sadly. And then the party drove off, and vanished in the night shades, and Yeobright entered the house. The ticking of the clock was the only sound that greeted him, for not a soul remained; Christiana, who acted as cook, valet, and gardener to Clym, sleeping at his father's house. Yeobright sat down in one of the vacant

chairs, and remained in thought a long time. His mother's old chair was opposite; it had been sat in that evening by those who had scarcely remembered that it ever was hers. But to Clym she was almost a presence there, now as always. Whatever she was in other people's memories, in his she was the sublime saint whose radiance even his tenderness for Eustacia could not obscure. But his heart was heavy; that mother had *not* crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart. And events had borne out the accuracy of her judgment, and proved the devotedness of her care. He should have heeded her for Eustacia's sake even more than for his own. 'It was all my fault,' he whispered. 'O my mother, my mother! would to God that I could live my life again, and endure for you what you endured for me!'

On the Sunday after this wedding an unusual sight was to be seen on Blackbarrow. From a distance there simply appeared to be a motionless figure standing on the top of the tumulus, just as Eustacia had stood on that lonely summit some two years and a half before. But now it was fine warm weather, with only a summer breeze blowing, and early afternoon instead of dull twilight. Those who ascended to the immediate neighbourhood of the barrow perceived that the erect form in the centre, piercing the sky, was not really alone. Round him upon the slopes of the barrow a number of heathmen and women were reclining or sitting at their ease. They listened to the words of the man in their midst, who was preaching, while they abstractedly pulled heather, stripped ferns, or tossed pebbles down the slope. This was the first of a series of moral lectures or sermons on the mount, which were to be delivered from the same place every Sunday afternoon as long as the fine weather lasted.

The commanding elevation of Blackbarrow had been chosen for two reasons: first, that it occupied a central position among the remote cottages around; secondly, that the preacher thereon could be seen from all adjacent points as soon as he arrived at his post, the view of him being thus a convenient signal to those stragglers who wished to draw near. The speaker was bareheaded, and the breeze at each waft gently lifted and lowered his hair, somewhat too thin for a man of his years, these still numbering less than thirty. He wore a shade over his eyes, and his face was pensive and worn; but though these bodily features were marked with decay, there was no defect in the tones of his voice, which were rich, musical, and stirring. He stated that his discourses to people were to be sometimes secular, and sometimes religious, but

never dogmatic ; and that his texts would be taken from all kind of books. This afternoon the words were as follows :

“ And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king’s mother ; and she sat on his right hand. Then she said I desire one small petition of thee ; I pray thee say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother : for I will no say thee nay.”

Yeobright had in fact found his vocation in the career of an itinerant open-air preacher and lecturer on morally unimpeachable subjects ; and from this day he laboured incessantly in that office, speaking not only in simple language on Blackbarrow and in the upland hamlets round, but in a more cultivated strain elsewhere — from the steps and porticoes of town-halls, from market-crosses, from conduits, on esplanades and on wharves, from the parapets of bridges, in barns and outhouses, and all other such places in the neighbouring Wessex towns and villages. He left alone set creeds and systems of philosophy, finding enough and more than enough to occupy his tongue in the opinions and actions common to all good men. Some believed him, and some believed not ; some said that his words were commonplace, others complained of his want of spiritual doctrine ; while others again remarked that it was well enough for a man to take to preaching who could not see to anything else. But everywhere he was kindly received, for the history of his life had become generally known.

(The End.)

987-01-10111

BELGRAVIA.

JANUARY 1879.

Donna Quirote.

BY JUSTIN MCCARTHY.

CHAPTER I.

'WIDOWED WIFE AND WEDDED MAID.'

THE dawn came creeping slowly up over Genoa. It was the dawn of a beautiful morning in late autumn, when the Mediterranean shores of northern Italy look specially lovely; and yet this dawn showed livid and cheerless in the eyes of the watchers who became aware of its presence as they saw it stealing into a room in an hotel that looked upon the arched promenade and the port and the sea. 'Ugly night' is described in some lines of immortal beauty as coming breathing at the heels of the setting sun. The dawn sometimes looks uglier still as it comes breathing at the heels of the night, which threw at least a pitying and friendly shelter over tear-stained faces and weary eyes.

There were three or four persons in the room, and they were gathered round a death-bed. Albert Vanthorpe, a young Englishman of some three-and-twenty, had just died. The watchers had been with him all the night, and it was in the hopeless hush that followed the first assurance of his death that some of them became aware of the coming of the dawn. One of the watchers said in a low firm voice—

'It is all over; there is nothing else to be done. I should like to be left alone for a little, if you please; I should like to be left alone—with my husband.'

One of the watchers, an elderly lady, seemed to hesitate; she stood as if about to plead some objection. The younger said with a beseeching gesture—

'Oh, yes; even you too, dearest! Only for a moment or two; you will come back again. Just a moment or two.'

The elder lady and the others left the room without a word, and the wife was alone with her husband.

She was a very young wife, not to say a very young widow. She did not look quite twenty; she was in fact a little more than twenty-one; she was rather tall, and had a pale face that looked as if the melancholy dawn were its proper setting. For all the haggardness given to her by the hour and the occasion, she was singularly handsome. She sat by the bedside of the young man who lay dead, and took one of his hands in hers. Her eyes sometimes wandered round the room which the dawn began faintly to light. A strange indescribable effect was wrought on her mind by the sight of objects that had belonged to him and now belonged to him no more—his clothes, some of his books, his watch, his chain, rings, purse; the presents that he had brought home to give to friends, the cigar-case, the silver-mounted revolver that he had lately been carrying—all these things that had no owner now; or, stranger still, had her for their owner. It was strange, indeed, to think that she alone had now the absolute right to sit beside him as he lay dead; that it was for her alone to say who should come into the room and who should be refused admission. It was very strange to think that people would come to her soon and ask her what was to be done with everything he had left behind, and that her word would be a law even as to the very place where his body was to lie. The other day she was a dreamy, impracticable girl, full of nonsensical ideas and preposterous schemes; and now she had a whole world of practical responsibilities put upon her and was absolutely independent of all control. She bent her face over the dead young man and kissed his chill, rigid hand; not again and again as agonised mourners vainly do, but once timidly and respectfully.

This was not assuredly the sort of grief which a young wife just bereaved might be expected to feel. In all the strain and confusion of the moment's emotions, Gabrielle Ronalds was distinctly conscious of this; she was as clearly aware of it as she was aware of the fact that the coming of the dawn was rendering the light of the soft lamps a superfluity. She knew that her regret for the dead man was not what the grief of a wife ought to be; and she was conscious of a painful impression that her putting on the aspect of a widow's sorrow would in some measure be like the playing of a part, perhaps like that of a professional mourner hired for a funeral. If she could have lived her life over again and could have known what was coming, she would have tried to love him much more than she had done; she would have compelled herself to love him; she must have loved him. Nobody surely could have deserved to be loved more than he had deserved love from her. Of course she was inclined to heap unmerited reproaches on herself now, and to make a crime of what was in the truest sense

a duty. The only fault of which she could even in this remorseful moment accuse herself was, that she could not succeed in loving poor young Vanthorpe. She had never deceived him or herself as to her feelings: he knew that she did not love him; he knew more—he knew that she had tried her very best and failed. Now however, she kept telling herself over and over again of his goodness and her unworthiness; of his generous heart, his uncalculating, unchanging affection, which would have given everything and which got nothing; and she contrasted this with her own cold and deliberate study of her emotions and inclinations, and she told herself that she ought to feel penitent and ashamed.

After a while some one tapped lightly at the door, and she heard a voice calling the name that was his. She started, and turned her eyes instinctively to the bed, as if it must have been the dead man's name that was so inopportunistically spoken. She forgot for the moment that it was her own name; that, like all the rest he once owned, it belonged to him no longer but only to her.

When we spoke of her as Gabrielle Ronalds a few lines back, it was by the name which belonged to her as an unmarried girl. Nothing could be more natural than to describe her in this way, for in truth she had hardly had time to recognise herself by the name which marriage had given her. She has not yet been three days a wife, and she is a wife only in name. The last few hours of her married life had been spent in watching with others at her young husband's death-bed. All this is not so mysterious or even so romantic as it may seem at first. Albert Vanthorpe had loved her since they were boy and girl together, and she had sometimes thought that she could love him. But she had always found when he pressed the question on her, or she pressed it on herself, that she could not, and at last saw her way and made up her mind clearly on the point. He was always in weakly health and he went on a long travelling expedition in order to get stronger; and for a while he was growing stronger, and every one who cared for him began to hope that he had a long career before him. Perhaps he grew too fully assured of his own strength and he overtaxed it, and did all manner of toilsome and adventurous exploring feats, and he brought on his death. One day Gabrielle received a letter from him, dated from Genoa, telling her plainly that he had got thus far on his way home only to die, and in simple, pathetic tones asking her to give him the one only gratification he now could have in his closing hours—that of calling her his wife even for once before he died. To her who knew so well his sweet, soft, somewhat feminine nature, this wish seemed peculiarly characteristic of him. She reproached herself that she had not forced herself to love him

in time ; and if he had now asked her to become his wife with the view that she might be burnt as his widow on his funeral pile, she was well in the mood to have uncompromisingly accepted the offer. She agreed to marry him, and she and his mother went out to Genoa together. There was no difficulty there in having his last romantic whim gratified.

The event which he expected was nearer even than he had anticipated, and he died, as we have said, within three days after his marriage. He had had a will prepared, and he had it brought to him immediately after the marriage ceremony, and he read it over and signed it and had it properly attested. Gabrielle wondered that he could think of such things then, but he smiled with a peculiar melancholy sweetness at her, and murmured something about marriage altering a man's will, or something of the kind—she hardly knew what. When this was all done and the lawyer was gone he took her hand and kissed it, and told her he was now happy, for he had made her his wife and had made her rich.

'Oh, I remember all your plans and projects,' he said, 'and now you can carry some of them out. You will be able to do good to somebody, at all events ; and I should never have known the way how, and so that's all right.'

He smiled another of his boyish smiles, and the smile brought a pang to her heart. She had always complained of him for being too boyish, and had sometimes impatiently given that as a reason why she could not marry him. He was older than she, but she had often talked and thought of him as if he were only a child. She was constantly complaining that he did not try to turn his life to any account, and had compared him more than once to Richard Carstone in 'Bleak House,' the young man who keeps to nothing, and dies saying he is just going to begin the world in earnest. 'If he should remember that now,' she thought with terror, and remind her of it, and tell her that her comparison was made good at last. But he did not remember it, or at least he did not say anything about it. He did remind her, however, that she had often told him that anybody with his fortune ought to be ashamed not to do some good for the world ; 'and now,' he whispered, 'I am doing some good for the world ; for I am giving you the chance of doing good, and you know how to make use of it. So you see I am not quite such a foolish boy after all.'

Now it is all over. The dawn has come ; the young life has gone. Some one is calling to her, is calling her by his name, and she is now and henceforth Mrs. Albert Vanthorpe, a wife and a widow at once. She is very calm and composed to all appearance, and she goes out, and talks, and gives directions in a low

firm tone, so that sometimes those who speak with her think she does not feel anything about what has happened; and those who know a little more of her story say to themselves, that of course she can't be expected to care much; that she had refused him before, and only married him now because he couldn't live, and to please him; and that she was to have a great deal of money. Still, the German chambermaid thought she might try to look a little more as if she was sorry; and the Italian nurse said she had seen many young widows in her time, but she did not remember ever to have seen one that took sorrow as easily as that. The English doctor who had been brought with the young man's mother and Gabrielle from Harley Street, and who could do nothing whatever but say a soft word or two to the hopeless patient, had taken Gabrielle's hand kindly in his and felt her pulse, and looked into her large tearless eyes, and told her to be sure she left Genoa as soon as possible and got back to the active life of England; and impressed upon her in low warning tones that she must still have many duties, and that the husband she had lost would think she was most faithful to his memory the more she tried to bear up and do them. For the doctor read the story of her calm demeanour so differently from the German chambermaid and the Italian nurse, that he had formed an uneasy suspicion that the young widow was contemplating suicide. A woman is capable of anything, he said to himself, when she looks like that.

Meanwhile the mother of the dead man, who had been with him to the last, and had only left the room at Gabrielle's prayer when all was done, now sent in her maid to ask if she might see Mrs. Albert Vanthorpe.

The formality of the request surprised Gabrielle.

Of course she would see Mrs. Leven, but should she not go to her?

'Many thanks, no. Mrs. Leven would come to Mrs. Vanthorpe.'

Another moment and Mrs. Leven came. In the yet colourless dawn her face looked marvellously like that of her son. Gabrielle was going to meet her with all the affection due to their common suffering, but the elder woman cut her short at the very threshold.

'No more of that, thank you, between us. While he was living I would not give him a moment's pain'—her lips trembled as she looked at the white rigid face on the pillow; 'but now he cannot hear any more; and I have come to tell you that I am leaving Genoa at once, and that there is no reason why you and I should meet in England or anywhere else. We could never be friends—never, never! I blame you for all this; if he had never seen you he would be alive and happy now; or if you had married him in time,

when the poor foolish boy asked you, he might have been alive now.'

'But, Mrs. Leven,' the girl pleaded with scared, appealing face, 'you always said you liked me—you always said you were so fond of me. You praised me when first I said I couldn't marry him; you told me yourself I had done right.'

'I didn't know then that the poor boy was so mad about you; I would rather he married anybody than have been unhappy. He was always happy until lately; and I know now that he never cared for his mother this long time. You have his name now, and all the rest. I don't grudge you his money—you know that. I am glad you have it, for it will help you to make yourself ridiculous all the faster. I have only come to say now that I presume you will have my son buried with his father and his people.'

Gabrielle made a gesture as if in utter deprecation of any sinister purpose on her part.

'Of course I insist upon nothing,' Mrs. Leven went on; 'I have no right. If cremation or something of the kind should suit your ideas, I have no right to interfere. I am told that my son's will gives you express right to do as you think fit in that matter too.'

Gabrielle did not know; she had not thought about the precise provisions of the will.

'Oh, yes; you have the right to do as you please in everything. I only ask leave to remind you that my son was a gentleman; that there is a burial-place where his father and his grandfather were buried before him, and where his mother hopes to be buried one day; and where, before that time comes, she might wish sometimes to see her son's grave, if modern ideas would allow of so much concession to old-fashioned sentiment—that's all.'

Gabrielle only said—

'He is much more yours than mine, this poor boy. Though he did give me his name, I don't know how you think I would do anything—if you *do* think it—to give you any pain about him; now, I mean;' for she saw the expression forming itself on Mrs. Leven's face which would have said, 'Have you not given me pain enough about him? Did you not take him from me?' So Gabrielle hastened to forestall superfluous contention with the one simple pathetic qualification 'now.'

'Well, that is all I have to say; and it is easily said. I hope we shan't meet any more.'

'Ought we to quarrel here?' Gabrielle said, with a gesture towards the death-bed. 'If *he* could hear us, think how it would pain him.'

'I did think of that while he could hear us. You must admit

that I never said a word all the time to make him suspect that I was not delighted with all the whole arrangement.'

'No; you deceived me as well as him,' Gabrielle said sadly; 'I thought you were still to me what you always were before.'

'I meant to spare him, and I did spare him.'

'I thank you for that with all my heart and soul.'

'Don't thank me in his name. Let me be spared that.'

The mother went to the side of the bed and knelt down and remained a while there—only a moment or two, as if in prayer. The young wife leaned upon the window-frame, turning her eyes purposely away from what was passing in the room, and looked vacuously over the prospect of sea, and hills, and sails, that was spreading out clearer and more lovely in the brightening dawn. Her heart was full of pity for the bereaved woman who once loved her, and now seemed to have only hatred for her. The girl's memory went back to days when that woman's house was the happiest home to her; when Albert and she were children together; to days much later, when the mother and she good-humouredly engaged in competition, one to spoil the young man, and the other to strengthen him; to days when it no more entered into the heart of any of the three that they could ever be sundered in affection, than it occurred to them to think that the boy's career was to end in mere boyhood.

She looked back into the room; Mrs. Leven had risen from her knees and was going away. Gabrielle gave way to an impulse of old affection and devotion; she ran between her and the door, knelt down, caught her hand and pressed it to her lips. It was of no use, Mrs. Leven went resolutely and coldly out of the room, and the young widow was alone again with her husband.

Never were two friends more devoted than the woman who had just gone from the room and the mother of the girl who was left there. When Gabrielle's mother died she had left her little daughter to the care of her friend, and had further made to the friend that faithful promise so often exacted by yearning affection, that if she could come back even for a moment, a shadow from the land of shadows, she would return to her friend to tell her of the whence and the whither. They were bound by the additional bond of affection that each was a widow, and each had but one child—at least, Albert's mother had only him to love. But look how things come about; a few years pass, and everything is unlike what the most cautious and calculating mind might have anticipated. The one thing reasonable would have seemed to be that this girl and boy should love each other and marry; and such seemed to be the arrangement of things developing itself, until

suddenly the girl took it into her head that she could not love him, and that she would not marry him; and from that moment, as it seemed to his mother at least, all went wrong. The young man made himself intellectually and in all other ways the devoted slave of the girl who would not marry him. Her opinions upon everything were law to him; all her dreams, and whims, and odd new ways were the inspirations of genius for him; and the mother was not wrong in believing that a word from Gabrielle was more to him than a sermon or a precept from her. He never would listen to a word said even in complaint of Gabrielle's refusal of him. He was always a weak and tender-natured lad, his mother thought; and this was one of the reasons why she would have wished Gabrielle to marry him, for the girl's vigour of intelligence and resolve would have counteracted the defects of his temperament. He went away to travel, evidently still holding to a hope that he could persuade Gabrielle to love him yet, and having vague ideas of doing something gallant and good to deserve her; and his mother, too, still looked for something of the kind. But Gabrielle would not hear of it, and at last left the home in which she had lived so long; and Mrs. Leven being still a handsome woman, who had barely ceased to be young, was herself induced one day to marry again. Hers was a fitful nature, full of sudden emotion and impulse, and she accepted an offer of marriage, not very well knowing why she did so, but having a vague idea that, as she had been disappointed in everything, she had a right to pay off the destinies by disappointing reasonable expectation in her own case. Then came the news that her boy was dying, and his passionate desire to be married to Gabrielle; and the mother was as angry in her heart with the girl for consenting to his treaty now as for having refused it before. No question of money had anything to do with Mrs. Leven's anger. She had money of her own; her new husband was a man of considerable property. Her son's fortune, which was large, had all been left to him by his father's brother, who had made it as a successful railway contractor. Mrs. Leven had never liked him or his money either, and would, if left to herself, have much preferred that her son should be wholly dependent on her. Albert's having a fortune of his own to look out to always seemed to her the first cause of his coming to have ideas that were not hers, and of his being ready to accept the laws of life from the lips of a pretty girl rather than from those of one who had lived and suffered and known the world. She blamed Gabrielle for everything—her own second marriage among the rest. She blamed herself, indeed, for having as it were forced the girl on her son's notice; but she only con-

demned Gabrielle now all the more for this. 'Without this lass,' says poor Caleb Balderstone, 'would not our ruin have been a'thegither fulfilled!' Mrs. Leven now thought even more bitterly of her dear old friend's daughter. Without that lass there would have been little to suggest a ruin of her hopes, to say nothing of ruin's fulfilment. Yet she kept down all her feelings for love of her son while she and Gabrielle were travelling to Genoa, and only revealed herself when Albert's ears could hear no more.

It must be owned that the position of the young woman who is now left alone in the dawn with the corpse of the youth whose name she has taken is sufficiently strange and trying even for the bravest spirit and the healthiest temperament. A new life indeed is that which is opening on her. She is a widow almost at the very moment of becoming a wife; she has lost the brother of her heart and of her childhood; she has lost the friend who was a mother to her, and seems to have found an enemy instead. Gabrielle never before thought of the possibility of her having an enemy, unless when in some of her dreamings she pictured herself as fearlessly frustrating the plans of the wicked in the cause of the good, and thus winning the enmity of the children of darkness and being proud of it. She has lost much indeed; and she has gained or had forced upon her what wise people would probably think most dangerous or fatal gifts for one so young and full of fancies: she has money and she has absolute independence

CHAPTER II.

'THE GRACELESS GIRL.'

SOME months had passed since Albert Vanthorpe's death. Summer had come upon London. Albert's mother and her husband were at home. They lived in one of the streets running out of Piccadilly, in a small old-fashioned house which Major Leven's family had owned for time out of mind. Major Leven's family had belonged to quiet better-class respectability—if we may use such a phrase—for more generations than we venture to enumerate, neither sinking nor rising all the time.

Since Albert's death they had lived in seclusion—that is, a sort of seclusion. Mrs. Leven saw nobody in the hostess's sense, and of course went nowhere; but her husband was a very active and busy man, and his doors were almost as constantly open as those of the good Axylus in the 'Iliad.' It was for some time a mystery to the friends of Major Leven and his wife alike, why these two should have married. Leven was fifty years old at least, and had always been set down as not a marrying man. But he

had found much pleasure in the society of Mrs. Vanthorpe, as she then was, and in the people who used to go to her house ; and he took it into his head that she must be lonely without her son, when Albert went travelling all over the world ; and one day he asked her to marry him. As we have said, she accepted him out of a kind of spite against the destinies. If it were to do over again, she at least would probably not do it ; but he and she got on very well, and he was happy in his own way.

Major Leven had left the army, and had devoted himself to the wrongs of mankind. He had considerable means, and he gave up his time to the redressing of wrong. He had written more pamphlets and accompanied more deputations than perhaps any other man of his time. He had never succeeded in getting into parliament ; partly because he was always induced to come forward and contest some hopeless place where nobody but himself could possibly be induced to waste time and money in such an endeavour, and partly because at the moment of every contest his soul was sure to be in some case of grievance which he would put forward as his great motive in entering parliament, and for which the constituents whose favour he sought could not be induced to care a rush. The chiefs and managers of parties swore at him a good deal among themselves, for he was always disturbing the arrangements of head-quarters everywhere and splitting up constituencies. When a contest between some representative of his own political party and an opponent was so nicely balanced as to leave to his own side only a confident hope of success, Major Leven was sure to appear in the field as the exponent of some cause, or case, or grievance, for which the chiefs cared nothing, to present himself as a candidate on that platform, and carry off just enough of eccentric votes to make the victory sure to the enemies of the party with whom, to use the correct phrase, Major Leven usually acted. If any foreign or colonial difficulty arose in the way of the Government, no matter to what party the Government belonged, Major Leven was instantly out with a pamphlet, in which, by the aid of portentous local knowledge, he made it clear that Her Majesty's ministers had bungled the affair from first to last ; that their official instructors evidently could not even find out on the map the places particularly concerned ; that no one in the Government service knew any of the languages which the emergency required to be known ; that he, Major Leven, had predicted in a pamphlet years before exactly what would happen, and at the same time shown exactly what ought to be done ; and that he could even now in ten minutes put any intelligent schoolboy in possession of knowledge enough to enable him to pull the Government out of

the whole difficulty, if the Government would only have wit enough to allow themselves to be saved.

In private life Major Leven liked everybody and could hardly be persuaded to think ill of anybody; but his creed as an observer of public men apparently was, that every Secretary of State was a double-dyed and unmitigated villain bent upon the ruin of his country. Major Leven believed what everyone told him, unless it were the statement of a minister made in public; for all such statements he regarded as outrageous lies. His general impression was that all ministers, but more especially foreign and colonial ministers, were scoundrels who ought to be impeached.

With all this, Major Leven was not a self-asserting or bumptious man. He was in manner a very modest, courteous, kindly gentleman; a little grave and heavy, as indeed was unavoidable in the case of one who bore on his shoulders such a burden of grievance. An over-sensitive humanity, an implicit belief in what anybody told him in private, and a chivalric restlessness which did not allow him to hear of any grievance without feeling himself at once called to rush to the rescue, made him occasionally somewhat of a trouble to his friends.

He had no judgment whatever as to the rights and wrongs of any particular controversy, and was indeed generally secured by the side which first appealed to his attention. But he had considerable cleverness, when once a conviction had taken hold of him, in finding arguments to convince outsiders that that was the true side of the case. He had served a good deal and been in many parts of the world. When any grievance was brought under his notice, he had no difficulty in recalling some experience of his own which supplied him with reason for assuming that the wrong had been done. When he was at the Cape, just the same sort of treachery had been shown to one of the native chiefs; when he was at Rawul-Pindee he had had to interfere himself in exactly such a case of cruelty to a servant; he knew of his own knowledge in the Mauritius that a fellow had been promoted to a most important office for no other reason in the world than because he had married the favourite maid of the Governor's wife; and so on, through various other instances. Thus Major Leven was always able at a moment's notice to call himself as evidence to the truth of any case of alleged injustice about which it would be proper to worry a department.

Mrs. Leven was a good listener; at least, she always seemed to listen to her husband's arguments and explanations, and was never seemingly tired. Her great quality for this purpose was a faculty of self-abstraction. At present she had only one thought occupying

her mind, and that concerned her dead son and the girl he had married. But she listened with an air of deep attention; and the air was not assumed, for she was absorbed in her own thoughts, only Major Leven naturally assumed that she was absorbed in his grievances and not hers, and he was content with his audience.

Major Leven and his wife were at breakfast together. The table on Leven's side was covered with letters, newspapers, pamphlets, and proofs. It was thus he liked to breakfast. During the meal he had been interrupted more than once by important visitors; he liked to be interrupted. One of the visitors was young Walter Manny Taxal, second son of Lord Taxal, a nobleman who had been elevated to the peerage because he had finally proved his utter incapacity to serve his party in the House of Commons. Young Walter Manny Taxal was a fresh and clever youth with two sides to his character; he was an amateur musician and a popular agitator. He had a stronger voice than Major Leven and was a better speaker; but he believed in Leven, and was delighted to take his tone from him. He was about to preside this night over a great meeting of working men in St. James's Hall, and had come in to get some advice from Leven as to what he ought to say. The matter had been talked over, and Walter Manny was going away when he suddenly said—

‘Oh, by the way, Mrs. Leven, you can tell me, no doubt. May I call upon your daughter—or would she rather I didn't yet awhile? I should like to, if I might.’

‘On Mrs. Albert Vanthorpe?’

‘Exactly; yes; Mrs. Albert Vanthorpe. I saw her in town yesterday. She is looking pale, but she is very handsome; handsomer than ever, I think.’

‘I have not seen her,’ Mrs. Leven said slowly, ‘since my son's death. I don't know if she receives visits or not; I do not even know where she lives.’

‘Oh, she lives in poor Albert's house, you know.’

‘I presume so; I don't know.’

Walter Manny saw that he had, as he would have said himself, put his foot in it; he dropped the subject, and presently took his leave. Then Major Leven turned to his wife:

‘Don't you think, you know, Constance, that the time has come to forget and forgive? Time to hold out the olive-branch a little, as old Melbourne used to say?’

‘Not much time has passed, George; and I don't know that mere lapse of time does much in cases like mine. You can't be expected to feel as I do. I don't make any accusation of that, dear

but he was nothing to you ; I mean, he was not a son, and you could not understand how a mother feels. Why, the grass is hardly green on my boy's grave, and you talk of olive-branches.'

'Yes, yes, of course it's not long ago ; and I know it's too soon for you not to feel as much as ever ; but it isn't exactly that. I think you are wrong, Constance—I do, indeed—in putting any of the blame on her. You ladies are always a little unreasonable ; and—you don't mind my speaking on so painful a subject ?—I asked Dr. Saville particularly, and he told me most positively that poor Albert's death was certain years and years ago.'

Mrs. Leven only shook her head, but said nothing on this subject. She declined to be set right on a matter of such heart-and-soul conviction as that of the wrong done to her by her former favourite.

'I am told she never put on mourning for him,' Mrs. Leven said after a moment's pause, the uneasiness of which was chiefly occasioned to Major Leven by the fact that he had not yet quite got the particular thing said which he wanted to say ; 'she dressed the day after his death just as she did the day before. So they tell me.'

Major Leven was about to suggest that there might possibly be philosophical reasons very imperative on certain minds for wearing mourning before a melancholy and certain event rather than after it. But he checked himself in time, and spared his wife a speculation into which she could hardly be expected to enter very earnestly just then. Major Leven had in truth hardly known anything of poor Albert, and could only do his best keep up with the feelings of his wife.

'All these new ideas, I suppose,' he said. 'You rather liked them at one time, Constance.'

'I did,' said Constance sadly. 'I did not know then that they could take any real hold on anybody's mind.'

'Still, really, you know, you ought not to blame her too much ; and I do think, Constance, the time has come for making up the whole quarrel. I don't want to dictate to you, of course ; but it's a sort of duty on my part—quite a duty, I feel it—to press you a little on this point. And then, another thing'—he began to gain courage and resolution—'there is that other son of yours. I don't know all the rights and wrongs of the story, but he must have been very young when you and he didn't get along ; and time has passed away, and he may have changed ; and some sad things have happened, and we must not bear anger always ; and I do think, Constance, you would do well to turn this over in your

mind sometimes, and to remember that if you have lost a son you still have a son.'

'How do I know that I have a son?' she asked. 'For all these long years he has never taken any pains to remind me that I had such a son. How do I know whether he is living or dead? How do I know, if he is still living, into what sort of life he has fallen? How do I know what his associates are, or his ways of life? He may have married a gipsy or a dancing-woman for all I know.'

'He hasn't behaved well in not writing to you all this time, that's quite clear. A fellow's mother is his mother always, however they may have quarrelled; but I fancy, Constance, he may have had a little of his mother's temperament in him, and for that, my dear, if you will allow me to say so, you are more responsible than he. But anyhow, I don't mean to press this matter on you all at once. Just think it over, that's all I say. I felt it my duty to remind you of it. That's all.'

Mrs. Leven made no answer; one of her principles was that a woman should never contradict her husband. She held that the man was always to be regarded as supreme in his household, but she did not feel bound to translate her acknowledgment of his supremacy into action. She felt quite free to do just as she liked. She had not the least intention of acting on his advice in this case.

'Do you hear anything about her?' Major Leven asked; 'anything more, I mean, than that she hasn't put on mourning?'

Major Leven was really much interested in the fortunes of Albert's young wife. He had greatly admired Gabrielle when he used to meet her at Mrs. Leven's; she had always entered cordially into his projects. He was not by any means unconscious that with a good many purposeless persons he passed for a sort of bore; and he should in all ordinary cases have set down a handsome young woman as the least likely person in the world to enter cordially into his ideas. But Gabrielle had always paid him the delightful homage of an evidently genuine interest in any project that he might have had in hand. He had seen her eyes sparkle with generous anger when he denounced the iniquity of some Secretary of State or other official; she had come eagerly towards him to ask him about the result of some deputation to the Foreign or the Colonial Office concerning intolerable wrong inflicted on some meritorious race or individual.

'I do hear about her now and then,' his wife answered in a *hesitating* way, as if it were against her principles to own to any

interest in such a woman. 'I dare say she is forming a home for decayed old gentlewomen, or something of that kind; or for strayed cats, perhaps; I am not quite certain which. It is of no consequence, in any case. It won't last long with her; she will want some new piece of folly before long.'

Major Leven moved in his chair somewhat uneasily.

'But,' he said, 'excuse me, Constance, did you actually hear that she was getting up a home for strayed cats? It would not be a bad thing to do by any means, and I shouldn't think the worse of her; only, is she doing anything of the kind, or is this only your conjecture?'

'I don't hear much about her; I don't desire to; but Mrs. Bramble, the wife of Albert's old servant—you remember him?—comes sometimes here, and I have seen her, and she has told me now and then things about her. I did not ask her, but one could hardly refuse to listen to the poor old woman.'

'Of course not. Certainly not. Why should you refuse? Well, she told you——?'

'Oh, well, nothing very much, but that the young woman has all sorts of ridiculous persons coming to see her in Albert's house, and makes it, I fancy, a sort of refuge for the destitute. Mrs. Bramble is her housekeeper, and old Thomas Bramble; I believe she considers them her friends, and entertains their poor relations; and there was something about a distressed cat—I have forgotten what it was. At all events, I know that my boy's house is desecrated by her whims.'

Major Leven did not discuss the question any farther. He did not see much harm in what was told of Gabrielle, even if the worst were true. He was sure she would never forget to behave like a lady, he said to himself; from what he had seen of her he was quite satisfied that she would always be a lady. So he presently went to his pamphlets and his deputations, not wholly dissatisfied with what he had said to his wife about her living son, and what he had heard her say about Gabrielle. She *does* keep asking questions about Gabrielle, or getting to know about her somehow, he thought. The reminder about the son will keep working in her memory.

Meanwhile, the young woman about whom the Levens had been talking was not engaged in organising a home for decayed ladies, or cats, or sufferers of any kind. It suited the warmth and bitterness of Mrs. Leven's present mood to represent her as a restless organiser of all manner of schemes and novelties; but in truth Gabrielle had very little of the disciplined temperament which makes itself systematically useful. She was one of the last persons

in the world likely to be of use as a member of a ladies' committee, nor had she of her own prompting much interest in an abstraction called a 'cause' of any kind. She used to admire Major Leven very much for the readiness with which he could at a moment's notice throw himself into the championship of people he had never seen; the genuine anger which he could feel towards a whole department of Government; the completeness with which he could enter into the cause, so to speak, of a whole parallel of latitude. She had often envied him this faculty, and blamed herself because she had not more of the same sort of spirit. But her own feelings were awakened chiefly by the condition of some particular man or woman. Her impulse towards help was always to hold out the helping hand herself. She was quite conscious that she wanted all the discipline of nature which makes a successful and useful worker in any good cause, and she assumed that she lacked that faculty because she was a woman and not a man. Wealth and poverty, we used to read in the days when Lindley Murray was yet studied, are both temptations. 'This excites pride; that discontent.' Neither temptation was put in the way of Gabrielle. In her early days she had been left with only a slender provision for herself; but, on the other hand, she had passed nearly all her growing years with Mrs. Leven, in whose household she certainly saw nothing like great wealth as wealth is rated in our times, but she always saw the evidences of sufficient money liberally spent. She never heard any talk of difficulties arising out of the want of money except among the class who were generically described as 'the poor.' Mrs. Leven was a woman who delighted in having everything happy about her, and in making those around her happy. Albert had his mother's love of happiness joined with a sweet, sunny temper all his own, which had none of his mother's fitfulness and sudden strong gusts of emotion. One might have thought a girl brought up amid such companionship would have taken the world easily and as it came, and readily accepted the conditions of things that showed so favourably for her.

But, whether from nature or from the sheer force of contrast, Gabrielle grew up the most impatient of mortals, so far as all arrangements here below were concerned. The framework of human society seemed to her to have got all out of gear; and what amused her friends more, she always went on as if on her were imposed in some way the duty of trying to put things right. She would stop in the streets, if she might, to argue with a drunken man, and convince him of the evil of the course he was pursuing. If a red-faced woman at an apple stall seemed chilly in the keen

air of spring, Gabrielle regarded her as a victim to the unequal laws of society, and wondered that no one would take her home, and give her some warmth and shelter until the summer days should come, when she might follow her trade in the sun without suffering from east winds and cold blasts. Nothing would have given the girl more pleasure than to seat herself at the stall every now and then and attend to the sales, in order to allow the poor apple-seller an occasional relief. She was constantly bringing all manner of objects of charity to the house which was her home. Some of the stories Mrs. Leven had heard were true enough. Outcast dogs, affrighted cats hunted of hideous schoolboys, ragged girls who swept crossings, pretty, pathetic-looking organ boys, strapping lasses with saucy eyes, who sold flowers—these and various other victims of social inequality had again and again partaken of the hospitality of Gabrielle's house. Nor was there anything in all this of that merely æsthetic benevolence which is only touched by picturesque suffering. It was the suffering itself which won Gabrielle's sympathy, not its attitude or its prettiness. She held society responsible for everything—especially in the days before she had come to trouble herself with any thought as to what this all-neglecting, all-responsible society really was.

These ways were very amusing and even charming to Mrs. Leven for a long time. Gabrielle was so pretty and so graceful; there was such a fresh winningness in her perverse ways of looking at everything; she stuck by her nonsense so bravely; she lectured Albert with such a bewitching gravity, as if she were a Minerva-Mentor heaven-appointed to teach and guide and sometimes even drive him, that Albert's mother found her life greatly brightened by the companionship of this fascinating enthusiast. When Albert fell in love with Gabrielle, his mother was delighted; and even when Gabrielle refused Albert, the mother forgave her and went so far as to admit that she had done right according to her conscience, fully believing all the time that the scruples of conscience would give way, and that her boy would be made happy in the end. But when heavy disappointment fell upon all her hopes, she felt that she was growing to hate the girl. She hated her all the more because Albert would not hear a word that found fault with her. Then the melancholy end came; and she blamed Gabrielle at last for everything that had happened, and felt towards her much as a lady of the middle ages might have felt towards some fair sorceress who had bewitched and betrayed her son.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. ALBERT VANTHORPE.

THE house in which Gabrielle Vanthorpe lived was one of Albert's whims. Almost immediately after he had come of age, and when he still had hopes that Gabrielle would marry him, he had seen a pretty little house standing in a tiny enclosure of its own, the enclosure being itself enclosed in a corner of one of the parks. It was so surrounded by trees and so embedded in its corner, that one might pass by day after day without suspecting that the little gate led to any dwelling of mortal. Albert was delighted with it, set his heart upon it, succeeded in getting possession of it on a long lease, and had it furnished after his own favourite ideas. It was to be a surprise and a delight to Gabrielle if things came right; and when there was no possibility of things coming right any more for him in this world, he had made it his express wish that Gabrielle should live in the house after his death. She had settled there now. It soothed her to be always in a place associated with his name; she would, if she might, have made every room in the little house a shrine of his memory. Like the father of whom Pliny tells us, she would have had the cherished image in brass, in marble, in wax, in every manner of substance, if she might. She resolved to keep the anniversary of his death as a day of mourning and solemn fast. Mrs. Leven was mistaken in supposing that she had made no change in her dress when Albert died. She always wore black, but she would not advertise herself as a widow by putting on the preposterous weeds.

In all that was meant as a tribute to his memory there was, it is needless to say, a virtual acknowledgment that that memory might possibly otherwise have faded. At least there was the evidence of regret and something like remorse, because she had not loved him. Gabrielle was determined to keep his memory green with her; the determination itself an all-sufficient proof that she had truly interpreted the feelings of her heart when she came to the conclusion that she could not love him. Now that the bitterness of his death is past, and that every day is softening the force of regret into a tender and sweet emotion, it must be owned that Gabrielle Vanthorpe is not so unhappy as perhaps she ought to have been. Her deepest source of present regret is that her once loving friend, Mrs. Leven, seems to have hardened her heart against her. But Gabrielle is sure this will not last; and she has filled her soul with the determination to prove that she is worthy of that love which used to be like a mother's to her. Gabrielle has

vague, magnificent purposes of doing so much good with the means Albert has left her, as to raise a very mound and monument of noble deed as a tribute to his virtues and to the inspiration she has caught from them. Albert had had a servant who was once butler in his father's house and who afterwards married, and started a west-end lodging-house, which wholly failed and scattered all his and his wife's earnings to the winds. Gabrielle took up the pair, and put them in charge of the house and of herself as well.

There was one room in the house into which no visitor was ever admitted on any pretext. It was Gabrielle's own room, but not sacred to herself. It was a room which Albert had intended to make his own study, and had begun fitting up for the purpose. Every shelf and book he had had put in remained as it was, and Gabrielle had brought from Genoa everything that had been his and stored them as sacred relics in this memorial room. It was on the ground-floor, and was almost darkened by the trees outside; the gloom gave it additional austerity as a chamber consecrated to the memory of one who was no more. If Gabrielle had ventured, she would have asked Mrs. Leven to give her some precious relic of each period of Albert's life, the memorials of each stage of growth and culture and whim and fad he had passed through, in order that this chamber of memory might illustrate his whole career. Over the chimney-piece was a large photograph of the cemetery in which he lay buried and of his grave. One who came and sat in this room even in gaudy summer might have almost fancied himself far away from the tumult of modern life, buried in the seclusion of some lonely demesne, whose rightful owner is dead, and which is a monument rather than a home.

At first the pale and melancholy face of Gabrielle seemed quite in keeping with the room she commonly occupied, but of late it must be owned that activity and youth were sending back the glow of health to the face of the young widow.

With all her eager, earnest ways, some of which ill-natured censors might perhaps have been tempted to describe as flighty, Gabrielle was a great lover at times of quietude and always of beauty. She delighted to surround herself with pretty things, and was made happy in a childlike way by colours and perfumes. She enjoyed the sight of fruits even more than their taste. While waiting to do great good for all who needed a helping hand, she meanwhile loved to adorn her rooms with what might have seemed to others superfluous decoration. She enjoyed profusion, although she could well enough have told her heart to put up with stint if needs were. There was a great deal that must have been fascinating

in her present life. Its utter quiet at home, its absolute independence at home and abroad, the sense of sufficiency that it brought to her; perhaps, above all, the [prospect of the marvellous good deeds she was to do, and the faint sound, heard long in advance, the voices that were to praise her for her good deeds—all the conditions poured a soft, sweet atmosphere around the roman young woman's yet untried existence. Gabrielle had not many friends, but they were all such as she felt she could trust. They were all, it may as well be said, women. As yet she had not opened her door to any male visitor; Walter Manny Taxal would have applied in vain so far. Her friends were, as Mrs. Leven had remarked, of curiously varied classes of life.

One of her newest friends was Janet Charlton, a married niece of respectable Mrs. Bramble, the housekeeper. There were some fans and other trinkets of curious Oriental make which Albert had brought home for Gabrielle, and which had got broken or otherwise injured here and there; and Gabrielle wanted some artificer of delicate touch and trustworthy skill to whom they might be given for repair, or at least for preservation. Mrs. Bramble told Gabrielle she had a niece married to a man who could do just the sort of thing, and who made a living by it; she did assure Mrs. Vanthorpe ladies of the highest rank came to him, to repair the ornaments for them—things which they wouldn't put into the hands of the first jeweller in town. They were so friendly, some of these ladies; oh, you could not think; why, she had known countesses going and sitting for two hours together, chatting with Robert Charlton and his wife while he was doing the work they wanted to have done. Gabrielle did not suggest that possibly those great ladies sat there because they did not care to trust their ornaments out of their sight. She only said that she supposed if he could do the work to the satisfaction of such great persons he could satisfy her; and she sent him some jobs of work beginning with the least precious, until she found that he really had a marvellous hand and could be trusted with anything. The work was sometimes brought back by his wife, and Gabrielle insisted on making her acquaintance. She was all the more impelled to this because Mrs. Bramble suggested in a mysterious way that, although Robert Charlton was a good husband, yet his wife had not always a very happy life of it.

Gabrielle was still more drawn to Janet Charlton when she saw her. First of all, Janet seemed absurdly young for a wife; she looked more like a schoolgirl. This was personally touching Gabrielle. Next, she was singularly pretty, and even beautiful, and Gabrielle, loving all beautiful things, loved dearly to look



upon a beautiful woman. Then, too, Janet seemed so sweet, and innocent, and tender, so craving for care, and sympathy, and love, that Gabrielle thought it pity of her life if she could do nothing to relieve her of trouble, if trouble she really had. Gabrielle more than once tried gently to get at the young woman's confidence; but either she had failed to touch the right chord, or Janet really did not think that anyone could want to know anything about so insignificant a creature as herself.

Janet had especially beautiful hair; it was almost startling in its golden splendour. It was all gathered up in a great mass on the back of her head, and seemed as if, when let down, it might have clothed her in a robe of gold far finer and more becoming than Lesbia's. One day, when Janet had come to see her, Gabrielle could not keep from breaking out into raptures, to the young woman's blushing and perturbed face, about her glorious hair and her beauty.

'Why does not somebody paint you? Do you know any painters? I wish I were a painter for once; I could make a lovely picture of you. I never saw such hair.'

The young person thus complimented might be supposed to be gratified, but she did not seem so; on the contrary, she appeared rather to wince under the compliments. She faintly murmured, 'Oh, no; please don't say so—please don't.'

'Why, you foolish creature, you don't mean to say that you don't know you are beautiful? Has no one ever told you so? Does your husband never say so? Don't you ever look in the glass?'

The object of this appeal only grew more and more uneasy.

'This is genuine, I do believe,' our heroine said after a moment of bewilderment. 'It is real modesty! Men, I am sure, would not believe in such a thing; and I don't wonder. I should not have believed in it; here is a woman who positively does not like to be told, even by another woman, that she is beautiful!'

'Oh, no, please; it isn't that; it isn't modesty. Oh, no!'

'It isn't modesty?' Gabrielle said, highly puzzled and amused. 'Then what on earth is it, child?'

'It's only because I get into so much trouble by it! Oh, I do so wish I were not good-looking! I should be so happy if I were ugly! I wish I had the small-pox, or that I might cut off all this horrid hair.'

'My dear creature, you are talking sacrilege, simple sacrilege. I should not wonder if the roof fell in——'

The uneasy fair one with golden locks actually glanced up with

sudden fearfulness at the ceiling, apparently in alarm lest it might be going to descend.

Gabrielle saw the glance, and smiled and reassured her.

‘No, it won’t fall; don’t be alarmed; I did not mean that literally. But it sounds like a sin against beauty to hear you talk of cutting off that glorious hair. You would drive an artist wild, if he were to hear you talking in that manner.’

‘I don’t care,’ said the desperate little beauty. ‘I am often like to be driven wild myself.’

‘But why? What is the mystery? Come and tell me all about it, if it is no secret, and may be told. I have heard of the fatal gift of beauty, to be sure; but I always thought that where it belonged to a woman she was very proud of it, whether it brought fatality or not.’

‘They weren’t like me,’ the golden-haired one murmured; no doubt, having in her mind generally the women whose fatal gift of beauty was nevertheless a source of personal pride. ‘Oh no—if they had been, they wouldn’t have liked it half so well, I can tell them.’

‘Can you really? Well, will you tell it to me? I should like to know what the conditions are that ever make a woman wish not to be beautiful.’

‘It’s because of my husband,’ the young woman said timidly, and casting a glance round the room as if fearful that he might be there listening to her revelation.

‘Why, is he bad to you? You do not look like that.’

‘Oh, no, he is not bad, he is very good; and he is very fond of me, and kind to me in other ways. But he thinks I am too handsome; and he makes me very miserable sometimes.’

‘Thinks you too handsome? Would he rather you were not handsome? And if so, why did he marry you? Why did he not find some ugly woman to suit his peculiar taste?’

‘No, it isn’t that,’ and Janet could not keep from a faint smile. ‘But he thinks people look at me, and that I attract attention, and I don’t; oh, goodness knows, I don’t want to—if he only knew. No one comes near the place but he worries me and insists on my going to hide; or says they are coming after me, and that they all admire me, and they don’t, I do declare they don’t; half of them never notice me, or think about me—why should they? I wish I never saw anyone; he and I could be very happy together if we never saw anybody.’

Gabrielle thought for a little. The distress of the poor young woman was evidently genuine; and, for all the whimsicality of its *cause*, was very touching.

'Well, you are a beautiful young woman, that is certain. But I may speak quite frankly to you, as you have such good cause not to be too vain of your charms; and I must say that I think you would pass off quietly enough only for all that mass of lovely hair. You would be admired always by people who looked closely at you; but this is a busy age, and people in general don't give themselves much trouble about looking for beauty. I fancy no woman could go about with hair like that without being noticed; it is a challenge to all the world to stop and look. Now, if your husband would just let you cut that hair off close, and cover whatever had to be left neatly up in a little cap, you would not draw half the attention on you, and then you and he might be very happy.'

'Oh, but he wouldn't listen to it; he wouldn't hear a word of the kind. He admires my hair awfully; I dare not touch it—to cut any of it off, I mean.'

'I thought as much. That is the way with your self-tormentor always. There is a sure way of relief at hand, but he won't use it. Well, my poor child, yours is rather a hard case, and I should like to help you. I'll go and talk to your husband; he must be a man who can be talked to and argued with.'

'You go and talk to my husband?'

'Yes, child; why not? You won't be jealous?'

'Oh, no; ' and Janet smiled a really bright and cheerful smile that it did good to Gabrielle to see.

'Very well; he can't be jealous. I am not a handsome young man drawn by your golden hair. Yes, I'll go and talk to your husband, and see if I can't bring him to reason.'

'But if he knew that I had been telling, it would seem like complaining of him perhaps, and he might be angry.'

'Set your mind at rest, child; I'll not betray you. I will talk to him and get him to betray himself, and then I shall have an opportunity of giving him what people call a piece of my mind. Now we must arrange all this; I must come at a time when I shall be sure to see him, so that we may begin the acquaintance at once. It may take some time, you know, before my advice comes to have any effect. But it shall have effect in the end; for I am quite determined that something shall be done for you, and for him too. I can tell you I am not by any means without a certain sort of sympathy for him. It is something to have even an exaggerated emotion of love in such an age as this.'

'Yes, I suppose it is,' Mrs. Charlton said rather ruefully; 'I suppose I ought to look at it in that light, and I do sometimes; but you have no idea how very, very trying it is; and to think how happy we might be, we two, only for this.'

There was something in this simple utterance which brought tears into the eyes of Gabrielle, she could not tell exactly why.

‘You must not mind that too much,’ she said quickly. ‘There are worse things to be endured in life than being thought to much of by one’s husband. But I hope we shall bring him to reason. Tell me—there are other people who live in the same house with you; other lodgers, I mean?’

Yes, there were several, Janet said. Were there any of the sort about whom her husband complained in any way? Well, yes, there was one young man who lived on the lower floor; but he had never exchanged a word with her except the most commonplace civilities, such as he would offer to anyone else; and her husband liked him very much, and was very glad to talk to him sometimes. He was a very nice gentleman.

Now, Gabrielle had some trifling weaknesses of character as well as some larger defects, and one of her weaknesses was that she was apt to be annoyed when persons of a class somewhat beneath her own, as she fancied, allowed themselves to describe their personal friends and associates as gentlemen and ladies. What does a man want with being called a gentleman, she was wont to argue, if he has not been brought up in the ways and with the education of the class who are called gentlemen? So long as he is a good and true man, that ought to be enough for him. If I—thus she would reason—were an intelligent man of the humbler class, should no more crave to be called a gentleman than to be called a bishop.

‘A gentleman?’ she asked with some little emphasis. ‘Do you really mean a gentleman, Mrs. Charlton, or simply a respectable and agreeable man?’

‘Oh, no; he is a real gentleman; at least, my husband always says so. He looks like one, certainly.’

Gabrielle did not ask how it was that a gentleman came to live in the same place with Mrs. Charlton and her husband, partly because such a question would put very broadly the fact that she did not consider Mr. Charlton to be a gentleman, and partly because she reflected in time that even a true gentleman may come to be poor and hide himself in obscurity in London. But it always irritated her when people had not the courage to stand by their own class.

‘Well, Mrs. Charlton, I shall be delighted to come and see you whenever you allow me; and I’ll do my best to bring your husband to reason. You and he ought to be very happy. You must give me a little time, you know, to make your husband’s acquaintance, and see what sort of man he is, and how one can be

approach him. I suppose every man has ways and peculiarities of his own.'

'I suppose so,' the mild Mrs. Charlton said, willing to accept an opinion from any higher intelligence, although she was just on the verge of giving it as her conviction that all men were alike. It might have afforded a somewhat curious subject of contemplation to the student of human self-conceit, to find these two young women thus gravely laying down the law on the general character and moral constitution of man.

Janet Charlton was quite prepared to take her views from one who not only sympathised with her troubles, but was confident she could help her out of them; and she went homeward that evening almost indifferent to the curious or admiring glances which the passing stranger might throw after her. In all ordinary cases there was one terror which specially haunted the poor little beauty's mind. Suppose some evening, when she was returning home, she should be made the subject of unusually pertinacious attentions on the part of some admiring stranger; suppose he persisted in following her; and suppose just about that time her husband happened to be in the street and saw her? He would be sure to think that she was encouraging the stranger's admiration; and what would become of her? On the other hand, how was she to act? She had often thought the situation over, and could not see her way to any safe and satisfactory course of proceeding. Suppose she were to remonstrate with the seeming admirer, and he were to reply that he had never been thinking of her at all; that he walked that way because his business led him thither, and that he presumed the streets were as free to him as to her? What was she to do then? She should only have made herself ridiculous for nothing. Then, besides, if her husband were to come up at that particular moment he would be sure to regard her well-meant efforts as only an artful device for the purpose of drawing on herself the attention and admiration of some stranger who would otherwise have passed unheeding.

But this evening she was walking home with a heart free from such cares. She was not thinking of passing strangers or their admiration; they might admire or not, for all she cared; and if her husband had appeared in sight she would have hailed his coming with unmixed joy. The sweet kindly ways of the new friend she had just left filled her with delight. The firm, decisive manner of Mrs. Vanthorpe gave her entire confidence; such a lady, she thought—so sweet, so kind, so gracious, and so commanding, could do anything. She thought, too, of the delight it would give her husband if so splendid a lady as that were to come and talk with

him in a friendly way; talk to him about books and the newspapers, and politics and wars, and things that she, his ignorant little wife, knew nothing about. It would be a great thing too that she, the ignorant little wife, had been the means of introducing Robert to this charming lady. That would be some pride for her, and make her husband think more of her; more of her good sense, that is, for she was sick of hearing about her beauty. It occurred to Janet, too, with a feeling of genuine satisfaction, that the lady was a great deal handsomer than she—oh, if one don't mind the hair, ever so much handsomer; and then Robert might get to understand that a woman can be handsome without all the world running after her, and without any occasion for her to be tormented to death by her lawful guardians, or treated as if she ought to be kept in a glass case. Indeed, the world began to look very bright this evening to handsome golden-haired Janet. She found herself humming a tune as she walked on.

Her way was not short. It lay through one of the parks. The evening was bright and soft, and the sight of the grass and the sun and the sky and the trees sent a thrill half of delight half of pain through Janet's heart. There came back upon her the memories of the bright time when she lived in the country, and had the trees and the flowers always around her, and took a deep interest in the changes of the seasons, and used to think it delightful to go to the church on Sunday; to cross the fields and get to the church with the huge tree in front of the gate. It was in that church she first saw Robert; and there she was married. She remembered not without a pang that she then thought it a glorious thing to go to live in London, which shone upon her imagination as a city of gold and marble, of parks and palaces. She was very loyal to her new life, and would not have admitted even to herself that she was not perfectly happy with her husband; at least, that she would not be perfectly happy if he would only trouble himself and her less about her beauty and about what people thought of her. But still the London of which she had daily experience was certainly a very different place from the London in which she was once so proud to think that she was going to live. Just at this moment, however, as she is crossing the park, what with her new friend and her hope of Robert's being talked into reason, and the fine evening, and the grass and the trees, the London that she sees around her does somehow begin to look like the city of palaces and parks.

Her happiness was destined to a slight disturbance, for just at that moment a cheery voice behind her was heard:

'Good evening, Mrs. Charlton; one does not often see you out

in this quarter. I am glad to have met you—or rather, I should say, to have overtaken you, for I have not met you. Do you remember the story about the slow walker and the snail ?’

Poor Janet was not in a condition to remember that or any other story just at the moment. She looked up alarmed and bewildered into the face of the young man who, as yet wholly unconscious of the emotion his presence was creating, was walking by her side and talking all the time. He was a tall young man, slight but strong, with something like the appearance of one who has not yet quite done growing—such promise did his chest and shoulders give when compared with the general slightness of his figure. He had a face with fine outlines, and a pair of sparkling dark eyes.

All Janet could say at first was, ‘Oh, Mr. Fielding!’ and then—‘you did so frighten me!’

‘Frighten you?—I’m sure I am very sorry; I didn’t mean to frighten you. Are you going homeward? I am. May I walk with you? Shall I carry your basket for you?’

For Janet was bearing a basket in which she had some little delicacies bought for her husband’s tea.

‘Oh, no, thank you,’ she said in an alarmed tone. ‘I had rather walk alone, please. I am not sure; I don’t think I am going home; at least, I think I am going the other way.’

‘What, back again—the way you were coming?’

‘I don’t know if I have not forgotten something; I have been to call upon a lady; perhaps I had better go back.’

‘Come, why not say at once you don’t want to walk with me?’ he asked in a tone of perfect good-humour. ‘I am not in the least offended; I suppose I ought not to have offered my companionship; but really one forgets the proprieties sometimes. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Charlton; good evening. You need not turn back, for I shall get on a good deal faster than you are likely to do.’ He raised his hat to her and was going on.

‘But I am afraid you will think me rude, Mr. Fielding,’ she said timidly; ‘and I don’t mean to be, indeed. And I am sure you only meant to be kind.’

‘Really, I don’t think I did, Mrs. Charlton, except to myself. I thought you were going my way, and I should like to have your company; I get a good deal of my own society, and I get tired of it now and then.’

‘I am sure I should be delighted,’ Janet stammered out, ‘and you are so kind to say so—to say you would like it; but I don’t suppose, perhaps—it might not be quite—oh, really, I don’t know,

Mr. Fielding; but I am very much obliged to you; and I want you not to think that I have been rude.'

She smiled with a half-alarmed eagerness that might perhaps have seemed an invitation to Mr. Fielding to remain in her company, but which was certainly not so intended by her, and was not so interpreted by him. He understood perfectly well what she meant; he could see without any trouble to his penetration that she was a kindly little modest creature, who for some reason or other thought she was bound to keep men at a severe distance. So he only said a word or two to assure her that he did not feel offended, and his tall slight figure was very soon, at his rate of walking, a speck in the dim distance.

Mrs. Charlton was troubled by the meeting. She was afraid that some one might have seen her who would tell Robert; she was greatly afraid that she had been rude, and had offended her well-meaning acquaintance; and again, she was afraid she had betrayed her fears so far as to let him guess that her husband was foolish and jealous. As she walked along, she wondered to herself again and again why women—at least, why married women—liked to be thought handsome. 'If I were not thought handsome by Robert, or anybody,' she kept saying to herself, 'how friendly I might be with everyone, and how happy I might be!' Her mind was a good deal occupied too by the prospect of the visit she was to have from Mrs. Vanthorpe. It was to be, moreover, not a visit but a series of visits. Mrs. Vanthorpe had talked of deliberately making Robert Charlton's acquaintance; and that would take time and would involve a coming again and again. It was very likely too that Mrs. Vanthorpe would ask Robert and herself to tea some evening; and then if Robert could only be persuaded to put aside his odd independent ways for once, and to accept the lady's invitation, how delightful it would be; how charming to have Robert show how clever he was, and what books he had read; and he would do so when he was at his ease, which he was sure to be very soon with so charming a lady. What a very young lady she was—what a young widow. Why, she did not look more than twenty! How Robert would admire her; and surely Mrs. Vanthorpe could not help liking Robert. The whole prospect was delightful. One little cloud was on it; Mrs. Charlton hoped somehow that the young man she had just met would not happen to be anywhere in the way when the lady came. Gabrielle's doubt as to whether he was really a gentleman pressed upon the little woman's mind. 'Perhaps he isn't a gentleman,' she thought; 'and if he isn't, I hope she won't see him at all.'

One question came up to Janet's mind many times during the

next day or two. Would Mrs. Vanthorpe come in her carriage? Would the carriage have one horse or two? Would the carriage stop in the square out of which ran the narrow street in which the Charltons lived, or would it actually drive up to the very door? Janet watched with unflagging attention for the sound of carriage wheels for two days, and after all did not know when her visitor was actually at the door. For Gabrielle, who was fond of walking and of seeing the streets, had merely set out on foot the third afternoon following Janet's visit, and walked briskly across the park and through a maze of streets, only stopping now and then to soothe crying children, and reason with wrangling or cat-persecuting urchins. At length she reached the square.

It was a very quiet, dull, decaying, grass-grown old square, somewhere in the region of the Foundling Hospital. Very few private houses were in the square; it was given up to charitable institutions and queer old libraries founded by long-forgotten oddities into whose awful cells no one ever seemed to enter. There were dispensaries, and little hospitals, and asylums for aged respectabilities there; but no mortal had ever seen a patient entering or borne into one of them, or a decayed respectability looking out of window or taking an airing in the sun. Glancing into one of the libraries, you could not fancy any modern reader studying there. One might, perhaps, form a conception of the founder of the institution himself, in neat black small-clothes and shiny knee-buckles, and rigid, decorous pigtail, taking some of the books down from their mouldering shelves and lovingly whisking the dust from their snuff-coloured leaves, and timidly making himself air when the rattle of a chance cab below suggested the possibility of a knock at the door and a visitor from the living world outside.

Perhaps Gabrielle Vanthorpe was nursing some fancy of this kind as she walked round the old square in search of the little street to which she was bound. Gabrielle was fanciful enough usually, and, whenever she saw any peculiar-looking house, immediately fitted it up with some appropriate story. Because of some fancy or other, she stopped a moment when she came to the opening of the street she was seeking, and hesitated to go down; it was dark and narrow; it had one long row of tall, heavy, old-fashioned decaying houses; the other side was only a huge wall, bounding one of the mysterious institutions already mentioned. There was no egress at the other end of the street; a wall stopped it up. The whole place looked mournful and forbidding to Gabrielle; it seemed to her for the moment that if she went down there something evil must come of it. She got over this feeling in a moment,

however, and went down the street until she came to the house she was seeking. It was tall, grey, and melancholy. A mournful memory of decayed respectability seemed to cloud its high flight of crumbling steps.

Gabrielle knocked and rang again and again. She did not understand the economy of the number of little bell-handles which she saw at the side of the door, and rang the first, therefore, that came to her hand. At last the door opened, and a young man stood before her who began by saying—

‘I am sorry you have been kept so long. I heard the bell ring ever so many times; and at last it dawned upon me that somebody whom it concerned must be out, and that nobody whom it did not concern would take any trouble, and so I thought I had better come to the rescue.’

‘Do you know if Mrs. Charlton is at home?’ Gabrielle asked, when he had come to the end of his rapid little speech.

‘I don’t know, I’m sure. Very likely she is. Will you come in for a moment, and I’ll ring her bell for you. That’s her bell, you see—second floor front.’

‘Oh, that’s her bell,’ Gabrielle said, rather amused by his quick cheery way. ‘I did not know.’

‘Of course not; how could you know? You have never been here before, I suppose?’

‘No; I have never been here before.’

‘Your estate is the more gracious, I can assure you. Now, you see, I have rung Mrs. Charlton’s bell, and she will be here in a moment. Won’t you sit down? I’ll bring you a chair from my room. It’s not any trouble, not the least.’

‘Thank you—no,’ said Gabrielle. ‘It is hardly worth while; I think I hear Mrs. Charlton coming.’

Gabrielle put on all the dignity she could call up on the instant, considering that she was, as we have said, rather amused by the eager courtesy of her new acquaintance, and was wondering within herself whether he was not about to ask her to take a seat in his room. At that moment Janet Charlton came rustling down the stairs. She blushed and grew confused when she saw Mrs. Vanthorpe and the lodger apparently in friendly conversation. Very pretty and winning she looked in her embarrassment.

‘Oh, Mrs. Charlton,’ the young man said before she had time to put in a word, ‘here is a lady to see you. She might have been there long enough, I fancy, if I had not happened to observe that somebody was ringing at the bell, and that nothing was coming of it. There never was such a house as this. I believe there

are servants, but what do they do, Mrs. Charlton—what do they do?’

‘I am sure I am greatly obliged to you,’ said the bewildered Janet. ‘I am so sorry, Mrs. Vanthorpe, to have kept you waiting. Will you be kind enough to come upstairs, Madame?’ she was almost overwhelmed at the thought of such a lady as Mrs. Vanthorpe being kept waiting in such a way, and was thinking to herself, ‘She will never come here again after all this.’

‘Vanthorpe?’ the young man suddenly asked, stopping short in the midst of the parting bow he was making. ‘Excuse me—did you say Vanthorpe?’

‘My name is Vanthorpe,’ Gabrielle answered gravely.

‘Miss Vanthorpe?’

‘I am Mrs. Vanthorpe,’ Gabrielle said. ‘Shall we go upstairs, Mrs. Charlton? Pray don’t make any apologies. I was not long waiting, and it was only my own mistake that caused any delay.’

She cut short anything the young man might have to say by a very chilling bow as she followed the confused and depressed Janet up the narrow staircase to the second floor. On their way up Janet contrived to cast back at the young man one wondering, reproachful glance that seemed to say, ‘Now you have done it. Oh, how could you be so odd?’

The lodger only raised his eyebrows and smiled at poor Janet wholly unabashed. He stood for a moment on the threshold of his own room as if thinking over some question which he hoped to settle in a moment.

‘Rather a rude young woman,’ he suddenly said aloud to himself. ‘I wonder if her husband, too, is jealous, and goes wild if anybody speaks to her.’

(To be continued.)

Down the Rapids.

LIFE cannot all be spent among the Thousand Islands,¹ delightful as they are; for winter creeps on apace, and we must obey the inexorable law which brings all men, great and small, back to the solemn mists of London streets, for that whirligig of human affairs—the season. So here we are at last, embarking from the wooden wharf of Kingston on board a certain huge white-and-green three-storied floating hotel, the Canadian river steamship ‘Corinthian.’ We have bid farewell, I fear me for ever, to our warm-hearted hosts on Mathieson Island; we have gripped the kindly Colonel’s honest hand for the last time here on the very wharf; and now we are fairly afloat upon the broad blue St. Lawrence, with our head pointing for the Rapids, and our hearts sincerely sorry at the parting from our new-made yet well-tried friends. That fortnight under the huts on the beautiful granite island has made us understand one another better than a year of conventional courtesy and urban intercourse; so that we feel a genuine void in the cardiac region as we see the Colonel’s red bandanna waving a last adieu from the shore, while the cumbrous steamer sweeps awkwardly round the wooded steeps of Cedar Island.

If you have never made a voyage on one of these great American river craft, you can hardly fancy how big, how roomy, how pleasant, and how truly comfortable they really are. ‘Floating palaces’ our kin beyond sea delight in calling them, with their favourite grandiosity; just as they never omit the chance of calling New York the Empire State, New Haven the Elm City, and Chicago the Queen of the Lakes. Very clumsy they seem, these steamers, as they lie alongside the wharves; but when once they have got well under weigh, they skim along the water as lightly as a beetle on a pond, and look like huge animated caravanserais, not without a strange awkward gracefulness of their own. It is Polyphemus dancing in character as a satyr, and dancing remarkably well. We pass many of them going in the opposite direction, as we steam down stream, all alike in their towering height, their light construction, their invariable white-and-green paint, and their exquisite motion; all alike filled with holiday-makers, alive with faces, resonant with bands, whose music tones down as it glides across the water, and floating at their sterns the inevitable stars and ever-obtrusive stripes.

¹ See ‘Belgravia’ for October 1878.

The 'Iona,' which used to convey tourists from Glasgow to Crinan, and the Rhine steamers from Cologne upward, are the best appointed ships which I have met with on European fresh-waters; but they would rank as inferior specimens of boat-building among the American lakes and rivers. The deck of our St. Lawrence 'Corinthian' is crowded with comfortable easy chairs fore and aft, under a pleasant awning, not very different from the deck of other pleasure-ships elsewhere; but the internal arrangements display the gorgeous American taste for gaudy brilliancy in its fullest form. The great saloons glitter with mirrors, gilding, and cut-glass lustres, till the eye is dazzled with their obstreperous glare. Crimson velvet stares at you from every sofa, arm-chair, and ottoman. Axminster carpets, flowered with monstrous roses and gigantic forget-me-nots, sink lightly in at every step, mosaic tables stand in every recess, and sky-blue satin curtains hang at every window. Ladies dressed to match, not in the simple travelling costumes of our English girls, but in long-trained silks and handsome Broadway bonnets, lounge carelessly in the *tête-à-tête* chairs, or devour 'Frank Leslie's Paper' and 'Harper's Weekly' on the soft and easy couches. Altogether the saloon looks not unlike a wealthy European drawing-room of the worst Parisian type, before Mr. Ruskin in character as Jonah had cried out against the abominations of Nineveh, and Mr. Morris had preached the gospel of artistic culture to the eager ears of Manchester and Sheffield. 'Not every man,' says Horace, following the old Greek proverb, 'has the luck to sail to Corinth,' and not every man has the luck to sail on the Royal Mail Steamship 'Corinthian.'

Beneath the saloon again, a lower deck, tier, or story contains the dining hall. Here, at certain appointed hours, breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, and suppers are served in a style not unworthy of an up-town hotel. Pleasant-looking coloured waiters, more often mulattoes than pure-blooded negroes, dressed in the white linen uniform which suits their dusky faces so well, attend to one's every wish with ready politeness. The black man, or his half-caste descendant, is the only real servant in America; and I confess, if we must have servants at all—which we must, I suppose, until the final triumph of co-operation enable us to cook one another's dinners, and black one another's boots, like equal gentlemen—I had rather myself be waited upon by a man of undoubtedly inferior race than by my own Aryan brother. The negro quietly accepts his lower station as something imposed upon him by nature, and so never tries to assert a clearly fallacious equality; but the white citizen who brushes your coat feels truly enough that only chance and convention have determined your respective positions, and

therefore bursts out at intervals into spasmodic displays of not wholly ungraceful insubordination. I respect a servant who sometimes flares up with righteous independence, but I feel reluctantly compelled to give him a month's wages and a copy of Mill's Political Economy as a parting gift. The relations of a good radical towards his coachman are essentially anomalous; so that, on the whole, I prefer a negro, whom I cannot pretend to treat quite as a man and a brother, but rather as an unrecognised cousin distantly connected with my disreputable early relations, the anthropoid apes.

Our course lies at first through the now familiar mazes of the Thousand Islands. Two deep-water streams, known as the Canadian and American channels, run down on either side, and form the ordinary pathway for steamers and large ships. Only little yachts and open boats can safely navigate the smaller straits, which wind in and out among the rocky islets. The Canadian channel boasts by far the prettiest scenery, but the American offers the greatest security to big vessels like the 'Corinthian,' so we glide rapidly down that open current, with a clear blue sky overhead, and a deep transparency of blue-green water beneath, churned up as we pass into snow-white foam, not unmixed with gleams of turquoise and emerald, by the mighty strokes of our huge revolving paddle-wheels.

Past the Thousand Islands, and down into the broad stream of the St. Lawrence—a monstrous river truly, reminding one rather of the Solent at Ryde than of any European stream. In most parts the breadth is about two miles, widening here and there to four or more, and narrowing in places to only one. Yet—shall I tell the truth?—for a large portion of its course the St. Lawrence is decidedly a tame and monotonous river. The Yankees have always tried to brag us down with the mere physical bigness of their native scenery, and we have been too ready to accept it at their interested valuation. Indeed, you cannot measure beauty by the square yard. They tell us over how huge an expanse Lake Superior spreads; but we visit Lake Superior, and lo! no lake at all, but a dull, flat-shored, tedious, and wholly unprofitable inland sea. They talk to us of the monstrous length of the Mississippi: but when we take steamer from St. Louis to New Orleans, behold! a ceaseless succession of low banks, timber-encumbered wharves, shabby wooden villages, and those dangerous but eminently unpicturesque and unromantic impediments to navigation, 'snags.' I could endure being wrecked on the Eddystone or the Bass rock; I could even put up with springing a leak on some shoal of the Blue Danube, some projecting point on the Bingen gorge, some sunken

mass of granite in the Niagara rapids; for these misfortunes, though serious, are not undignified. But who could submit to be swamped in the shallowest and muddiest reach of the Mississippi by a water-logged mass of broken trees? That were an indignity which might well cause a man to give up the ghost with the bitter reflection that he died not only inglorious but positively ridiculous.

I fear we must say much the same of the St. Lawrence throughout a large portion of its course; though I frankly allow that in other places it possesses romantic beauties of no mean sort. For miles and miles after we break into the open river, we run steadily on down a wide and somewhat tedious channel, bounded on either side by woodland or cornfields, neither high nor picturesque, and singularly wanting in the charm which the humblest European scenery derives from its tidy homesteads, its villages clustered round the Norman tower of the church, its mansions standing in the wooded parks, and its rarer castles perched upon the craggy hills. The truth cannot be concealed that America, on the whole, is a painfully ugly country, except where nature has done for her all that nature can do. Many a splendid stretch of open country, which in Europe would be rendered smiling and beautiful by copses, hedges, farmhouses, and all those other human adornments of the naturally undiversified plain, is here denuded of its wood from end to end, dotted about with barn-like frame houses, and disfigured by hideous 'snake fences,' made of unhewn rudely interlaced rails—an unhappy substitute for the green hawthorn hedges of our English fields. This great, broad, blue, bankless river *may* perhaps become beautiful in time, when higher tillage and closer population spread over its doleful sides; but at present it must be pronounced for the most part a magnificent failure, like the gigantic but impecunious Grand Trunk Railway which runs along its side.

Happily, we are not wholly dependent for amusement on board the 'Corinthian' upon the physical platitudes of the river bank. We take our seats on some comfortable easy chairs beneath the awning: I light my cigar, and peruse the latest pirated number of an English review; and my wife proceeds to work her pretty crewel anti-macassar, whose quaint half-mediæval design, cunningly devised by an artist friend, evidently causes much consternation and amazement among the American ladies round about. 'Such real odd colours!' 'And such a curious pattern, too!' 'You'll have brought this from Europe with you, I surmise,' one lady ventures to remark (Americans are slowly learning that they must not *guess* or *calculate*, so now they *conjecture*, *infer*, and *surmise*

instead). 'You wouldn't find it suit American taste:' an opinion which my wife, with a side-twinkle in her bright eyes, heartily endorses. And the whole party gather round, inspect the lizards and flowers of the crewel-work with a kind of deferential pitying contempt, and evidently dismiss it at once as a piece of surviving 'European' barbarism.

Other distractions we have in abundance, to fill up the time till we reach the real excitement of the day—the Rapids. There is a boy who sells bananas at a disgraceful profit of fifteen cents apiece, together with peaches, grapes, and pea-nuts at a less ruinous rate. There is a shrill youth with Prescott and Ogdensburgh papers, who spends his life in passing up and down between those rival towns and the next stopping-place at Cornwall. There is an accommodating band which alternates in its allegiance between Hail Columbia and God Save the Queen, according to the particular nationality of every separate port on either side at which we call. There is a well-meaning but somewhat obtrusive Plymouth Brother, who permanently 'evangelises' on board the steamer, as a sort of floating diocese *in partibus*, and who insists upon beginning his conversation by asking each passenger in turn the point-blank question, 'Are you a Christian?'—an interrogatory which your humble servant, profiting by the experience of his neighbours, unblushingly parries by answering that he is a Mohammedan from Central Asia. And, lastly, there is lunch admirably served in the dining-hall, with all the native luxuries of white-fish, fresh corn, tomato salad, and abundant fruit: so that, in spite of wearisome scenery, time flies easily enough till we come full in sight of the Long Sault Rapid.

There is a general rush on deck at the announcement of this fact, and then another rush from aft forward. Everybody crowds towards the bows, to watch the big ship plunge down the boiling flood. We can see the great breakers heaving and tossing into milky foam before us; we can see the river sloping over the sunken rocks; we can see the rafts in the distance rocking from side to side like eggshells; and in one moment more we are on the Rapid.

What shall I say of the sensation? My wife, who is a venturesome body, was disappointed. She wanted a bigger fall, a more sensational leap, and a greater chance of getting her neck broken. It was too tame and commonplace for her, she says. But, for my part, I was amply satisfied for the moment. I stood near the gunwale on the starboard side, looking over the railing at the seething mass of water below; and I could see the narrow *passage* in the barrier of rock through which we glided as though

by miracle, the rock standing only a few inches on either broadside from the vessel's bottom; and I found the waves quite big enough and fierce enough to make my heart jump a little against my watch-pocket, and my breath catch again in my throat at each respiration.

The Long Sault, however, though not bad in its way, is only a preparation for the greater attractions of the La Chine Rapid. This fall, which lies a little above Montreal, and crowns the excitement of the voyage, consists of an abrupt watery gradient, across a bed of rock, with a similar narrow passage, artificially blasted, I believe, just wide enough to let a steamer go through. As we near it, all steam is shut off, while the vessel depends for headway upon her own impetus and the force of the current. Jean Baptiste, the old half-caste Indian pilot, stands at the wheel, a motionless statue, his keen eyes fixed upon the distant landmarks by which he steers, and his gaze absolutely rivetted upon the well-known points. If he looked away for one second upon the boiling waves below, the path would be hopelessly lost, and we should drift like lightning upon the shoals beneath, break up at once into a mass of floating timber, and be carried down resistlessly by the mad waters. For fifty years Jean Baptiste has daily piloted ship or steamer down the La Chine channel, and his hands move mechanically upon the wheel, now turning it rapidly round and round to the right, now slowly back again to the left, as each point in the bearings comes in sight or sinks again. His eyes never wander from the shore to the wheel, but his muscles have learnt to perform their work automatically, and he looks as calm as though he were paddling his canoe through an open lake instead of guiding five hundred souls through the most dangerous navigable cataract on earth. The moral responsibility which would probably unnerve the stoutest European sits easily enough upon the lean shoulders of the stolid old half-breed.

In two minutes it is all over. But those two minutes enclose a world of hushed suspense. Not that any real danger exists for the 'Corinthian,' since day after day a steamer goes down unscathed, under the capable guidance of the steady French-Canadian Indian pilot. Yet the great breakers, the sudden plunge, the general lull in the babel of voices which one moment before surged up on every side—all these things combine to make the act of shooting the Rapids a solemn and impressive sight. Half-way down we grounded for a second on the port side, and an ominous thrill ran through the flimsy timbers from end to end. We glanced off again lightly in an instant—for these ships have a wooden bottom below the iron hull, so that the elastic timber may

rebound from the rocks in case of striking, which indeed is an every day incident: but we glanced off on to the opposite rock, at another slight tremor coursed once more from stem to stern. Some of the ladies shriek—‘they always do,’ the skipper tells me confidentially. But that imperturbable wife of mine, her crew work just quietly dropped at her side, and a fresh colour mounting her cheek with the excitement, merely observes that ‘this is rather better.’ ‘Quite good enough for me, thank you,’ I answer fervently: ‘no more to-day, captain, much obliged. La Chine will do admirably.’ And so, with a snake-like twist from a jutting rock before us, we clear the Rapids and their under-tow at once and glide out into the smooth water below.

Then the babel of voices bursts out again with tenfold vigour. ‘Were you very frightened?’ ‘Were you?’ ‘Wasn’t it rather disappointing?’ ‘Wasn’t it much worse than you expected?’ ‘Did your heart beat?’ ‘Did your heart stop beating?’ ‘Did you scream?’ ‘Did you faint?’ ‘Shall we have a brandy-cocktail?’ ‘Shall we have a glass of iced water?’ ‘Shall we recuperate with something hot?’ And so forth, through a thousand varying moods, inquiring, answering, solemnly, comically, affectionately, bombastically, with all the effusive self-exhibition of the American and Canadian mind. Young ladies air their poetical sentiments, young gentlemen their personal bravery and *sang-froid*, husbands and wives their anxious care for one another’s safety, as though your sleep were universally acknowledged as the best place to wear your head, and all the world were privileged to come and examine the interesting specimen.

For my own part, I found the Rapids disappointing, and yet quite bad enough. While you are in them, you feel that you wouldn’t like them to be very much more dangerous; but as soon as you are safely out of them, you begin to think they are not very terrible to brag about. Your valour, like Falstaff’s, grows awfully after the action; but in the midst of the fray you feel it, even as Bob Acres felt it, oozing out at the palms of your hands. Nevertheless, on an impartial recollection, unbiassed by the exciting emotions of excitement or fear, I think I must give some vote for considering the St. Lawrence Rapids just a little better than a bug. If you have ever been to Lodore or Blackgang Chin waterfalls, you will easily understand my feelings. The one tries to be a gorge, the other tries to be a gorge: but both of them fail miserably. The St. Lawrence Rapids fall into just the same mistake of aiming too high and missing their aim. It is true the St. Lawrence has such a complete fiasco as Blackgang, such an utter mistake as the waterfall berhymed by Southey; but they are not, on the

other hand, a magnificent, critic-crushing, colossal outburst of natural grandeur and irresistible force like Niagara, nor a glorious display of calm and passive sublimity like the first long view of the ramping Matterhorn.

How does the steamer get back again? most readers will ask. Well, it cuts the Gordian knot by going through a side canal at each rapid. The journey up is slow enough, against current, and without the excitement of the cataracts, so the steamers return empty of all but cargo. Their sole passenger business consists in conveying tourists over the Rapids, whose very difficulties make the pleasure of the trip. Persons going up again always choose the equally dull but less lengthy route by the Grand Trunk Railway at the side.

Evening begins to close as we leave the La Chine cataract in our rear, and the fireflies can be seen dimly among the pine-clad islets which mark the junction of the Ottawa with the great river. On the biggest of these islands stands the city of Montreal, where we must pass our last night on Canadian soil; and then, away for Lake Champlain and Lake George, on our homeward trail towards old England *viâ* New York and Liverpool. The lights of Montreal are already peering at us from the distance, and playing hide and seek with the fireflies among the pine woods in the foreground. We glide quickly down the rapid current and under the huge Victoria Bridge, one of the most famous and ugliest monstrosities in all America; and that is saying a good deal in a country which has built the Washington Capitol and the Mormon Temple at Salt Lake City. It is, I believe, the longest bridge in the world, unless the one across the mouth of the Tay has since eclipsed it; and if all longer bridges are to grow uglier in proportion, I fervidly pray that it may for ever remain so. 'The magnificent engineering achievement,' which would give Mr. Ruskin convulsions, consists of a huge iron tube or square box, some mile or so in length, set lengthwise upon massive buttresses, with a sort of wedge or knife-edge in solid masonry protecting each buttress on the upper side, so as to divide and break the force of the great ice-floes in the spring. When the bridge was first proposed, these ice-floes formed the main difficulty which stood in the way: as they come down with terrific force from the lakes, whose more southern waters break up and melt before the solid ice-sheet on the north-eastern St. Lawrence has given way. Accordingly, the huge floating masses, passing from the broad channel into the comparatively narrow neck opposite Montreal, make a 'jam' or heaped-up mass of ice, which often rises to considerable heights and threatens the stability of the bridge. Doubtless the work is a

very noble specimen of mechanical skill, and it stands well against the enormous pressure yearly brought to bear upon it : but if you ask me as to its artistic merits, I can only refer you to Bishop Pontoppidan on the 'Snakes of Iceland.'

So on we glide, past the hideous *chef-d'œuvre* of modern science, and alongside the crowded wharves of Montreal. The Rapids are passed for the last time in our lives ; the shades darken over the busy, lively, Anglo-Franco-American city ; and we turn in, nothing loth, to the St. Lawrence Hall, glad to discuss the dinner that stands waiting for our hungry tourist horde, and not sorry that our day's journey has come at length to an end. After so long a stretch, may we all always enjoy as good a meal as that which now smokes before us on the bountiful table of our Canadian host. Scenery is doubtless a splendid thing in its way ; but, after all, what would it be without dinner ? So let us leave off talking and make haste to fall-to with a will, or the tall New Yorker opposite will have got through all the tomato salad and green corn before we have finished our plateful of soup.

J. ARBUTHNOT WILSON.

Some Tales of White Elephants.

BY JAMES PAYN.

I KNOW a good and honest lawyer—*rara avis in*—(no, I shall want that fine old quotation presently)—an honest lawyer, who has stated it as his opinion—and his opinion is what people give pounds and pounds for—that it is a great mistake to be ‘much respected.’ His experience is, he says, that most persons who have been thus designated are dead; and that the rest suffer from their good reputations. He has himself often succoured the widow and the orphan, free, gratis, for nothing; and when the orphans have grown up they are apt to be grateful. They send presents to their ‘valued and much respected friend,’ from the uttermost ends of the earth, which is what he objects to, even when they pay the carriage.

And true it is, it often happens (even confining the matter to this country) that a present is a misfortune to one. For example, I am myself a poor man, and a rich friend sends me a haunch of venison. My larder is not big enough for it to hang in, my kitchen-range is not large enough to cook it; and it has to lodge and even to board out (for it requires flour and all sorts of applications daily); thus it costs as much as a leg of mutton to begin with. Then I am obliged to ask ten people to eat it, the expense of which entertainment reduces me to my last shilling. My rich friend has no wish to impoverish me, but the effect of his munificence is similar to that of the present of the White Elephant which the King of Siam gives to those whom he intends to ruin; its meat, drink, and clothing (for they supply its trunk, of course) eat them out of house and home.

Or, suppose I am a rich man, and a poor one sends me, as friendship’s offering, some ornament for my drawing-room, which is very tastefully and elegantly furnished; what the deuce am I to do with it? If it is really handsome, I feel that I have robbed him; if it is otherwise, though one does not prize a gift according to its cost, it spoils my drawing-room by its contrast with what is already there.

Again, there are a lot of people in the world who are always giving one presents which are worthless. They remember one’s birthday, and one’s marriage-day, and the anniversary of the day one was appointed a revising barrister, or the chaplain to the

lunatic asylum. They think it very touching to call to mind these interesting dates by the gifts of a paper-knife, or a box of tooth-picks, or a volume of Tupper's Poems. For my part, I would much rather 'compound' for all these subscriptions, as is done in the Inns of Court, and that they gave me a five-pound note, and had done with them.

There is a still more troublesome sort of people—generally very wealthy—who insist upon paying your fare for you when you travel with them by the Underground, or on defraying the turnpike toll when you drive over a bridge; but to get a five-pound note out of *them*—in the way of composition or any other—is a dream to be indulged in not even by the most sanguine.

Then there are some excellent persons who insist upon providing us with some specimens of their own particular productions; what they have themselves invented, concocted, or made captive to their own bow and spear; and which in nine cases out of ten, and independently of the obligation incurred, one would infinitely rather be without.

Your friend the amateur author, for example, sends you a presentation copy of his first novel in three volumes. Now, what are you to do with that? Of course, if you are prepared to read it, I have nothing further to say; but suppose you shrink from proceeding to that dread extremity; you have in that case to sit down and write quickly that you have received his most thoughtful present, which will indeed be highly prized, and that you are 'looking forward with the greatest eagerness' to its perusal. But if you think that will satisfy him, except for the moment, you are very much mistaken. He will be sure to inquire your opinion, sooner or later, about that immortal work—and then be on your guard; for fatal to your friendship with him will be the moment when he elicits the truth. Above all things, cut the book—I mean, with the paper-knife—on the instant of its arrival; no eulogy, however vague or skilful, will avail you if he discovers that this precaution has not been taken.

Again, there are some excellent housewives, who, not content with delighting their own families with preserves and pickles, and even medicines of their own manufacture, export them to other people's houses: they present one at Christmas with a bottle of home-made Curaçoa, better, as they inform us, than any we can get at the wine merchant's; and some specific of their own concoction, which, however 'sovereign' it may be against all other ailments, is quite powerless to ward off the effects of the Curaçoa.

Or again, one's friend is a sportsman, who having secured some prize of exceptional rarity, and modestly thinking it is too good

for his own table (or perhaps not unwilling that we should bear personal testimony to his prowess), sends it to us (generally unpaid) by rail.

The last gift I received in this way was from a famous fowler, and consisted of a black cygnet—*rara avis in terris, nigroque* (here you have it, as I promised) *simillima cygno*. Neither I, nor my cook, nor the poulterer round the corner, had seen (except on a sign-board) such a bird before. Its size was gigantic—much larger than that of a full-grown white swan—and it had no end of a neck. How this neck was to be cooked was a problem, while to cut it off was out of the question. For who would have been able to guess its nature, or have been by any means induced to eat it, had it come to table *without* its neck? As it was, I felt that I should have to make a little speech about it to my guests, in the way of introduction, not to say of apology for its appearance. As the result of the plucking of it we promised ourselves an eider-down quilt, if not an entire feather-bed, but at the very outset an unpleasant circumstance happened. It had arrived in apparently admirable condition: we had said to ourselves, ‘For once, we have really got a useful present out of old Webfoot;’ but directly the cook began to pluck it—it was not ‘the last feather,’ mind, that did it, but the first—it began to smell beyond all power of words to express. We talk of ‘knocking one down with a feather,’ in a metaphorical and poetical way, but one of our cygnet’s feathers was literally enough to do it. Why it was so, I do not pretend to explain. It is possible that, just as a gentleman of colour—though a man and a brother, and even a clerk in holy orders—has unquestionably a certain—well—an aroma about him, such as (I am thankful to say) does not belong to you or me, so this black cygnet had an odour that surely never belonged to any other race but his own. One has heard of sea-birds being ‘strong’ and ‘fishy,’ but those are feeble adjectives to express the exhalations from that bird. As to making anything with his feathers except a bonfire—it was not to be thought of. Of course our kitchen could not accommodate the cygnet, which consequently went to the baker’s—whereby we became in a manner public benefactors. One has heard how a knife that has cut an ortolan is thought highly of as giving a rare flavour to quite a common dish. Well, our bird gave a flavour (so the baker told me) to everything that he cooked that day, from a joint of beef to an apple-pie. They had, as one may say, the impression of our signet upon them—and it was a very strong one. When it came to table everyone rose and fled, and all the windows had to be thrown open, though it was far from summer weather. I buried it in the back

garden, with the coal scoop, with my own hands, and there it lies to this day, let us hope, deodorised; but if so it will be a great corroboration of the Moule, or Mould, theory, and of earth as a disinfectant generally. As to our house, if you had broken a gallon jar of attar of roses in it, it could not have been more thoroughly impregnated—only Cygnet, I do assure you, is not attar of rose.

Now, the honest lawyer whom I have in my mind pooh-poohs that terrible gift as nothing surprising. He says you must have presents from abroad, and from distant and out-of-the-way places, to appreciate their merits. One of his grown-up and grateful orphans—whom he had laid under eternal obligations by procuring him a divorce on the plea of ‘infancy’—once sent him a live dromedary (unpaid) from the upper Nile. ‘The hump,’ he says, ‘was by all accounts a great delicacy, but I could not kill so huge a creature for its hump, nor, if I had done it, should I have known how to dispose of the rest of the carcase. As to using it as a means of locomotion, that was not to be thought of; as a professional man I could never have ridden the creature to my office, and even in the park he would probably have been objected to, so in the end I gave him to the Zoological Gardens, the committee of which would have made me a fellow of the Society, only I happened to be so already. That was a sad business.

‘Then again there were the alligator pears (that is not their real name, but it is what the London fruiterers call them, who sometimes exhibit them in their shops). They come from Madeira, and, I hear, are thought very highly of by the islanders. One of my orphans, who is resident there on account of a delicacy of the chest, sent me one winter half a hundred of them. He said they were “peculiar;” which I could have believed without that statement from the context of his letter, for he added, “they should be eaten with bread-and-butter and pepper.” They looked like immensely huge green figs—very ripe. When you cut into them there was an enormous kernel, hard as a stone, lying in a mash or squash of what looked like black and yellow cream. It was this cream we were expected to spread upon our bread-and-butter like marrow. Hunger, they say, will tame a lion; but give me the alternative of human flesh or an alligator pear, and I should prefer the former. There was one virtue about these pears, which, although a negative one, I have learnt to appreciate in gifts of food from foreign parts; although it had every appearance of being in an advanced state of decomposition, it did not smell.

‘The most terrible present, however, I have ever received was from the West Indies. It came from an orphan, who had greatly prospered in the world, and who, thinking himself to be under

great obligations to me, must have wished to pay them off at one swoop. He sent me a packing-case of goods so large that it might have come from the West Indies alone (like the Cleopatra Needle) without being shipped at all. For some reason unknown to me (it was too large, perhaps, to be got out of the gates), it was stopped and opened at the docks, the authorities of which sent me the following official memorandum :

“Several articles have been consigned to you from St. Kitt’s, W.I., which await here your esteemed orders ; they comprise a cask (large) of pine-apples, and three live turtle, one of them dead. Another seems to be in an ailing state. We would recommend your sending for the above. The dock dues are as per enclosed.”

‘The last item was very considerable ; but one must not (thought I) look a gift-cask in the bungle ; and then the turtle at a guinea a pint would pay their own expenses and those of the pine-apples too. I was partial to turtle and also to pine-apple, and the notion of “the whole animal” being consigned to me in one case, and of a cask (large) in the other, flattered my sense of self-importance. It was only in accordance with the fitness of things that a man like me should be supplied with such dainties wholesale.

‘I let my clients run loose that morning, and took a hansom to the docks myself, in order to inspect my property. I had some difficulty in finding it, by-the-bye, when I reached the docks ; it is not only the law, let me tell you, which is hedged about with forms and technicalities, and requires lubrication—golden ointment—for its wheels. However, I found it at last ; a portion of it—the dead turtle—I could have identified at some distance. No. 2 had also died by that time, but was comparatively fresh, though of course uneatable. The third turtle was the most diminutive of its kind I ever saw in my life. Even at a guinea a pint I didn’t think its soup could have been worth more than seven-and-sixpence. It was more like one of those tortoises that are sold in the streets for ninepence apiece. However, though a small thing, it was my own, and I brought it to my office in the hansom, on my lap, to the astonishment of the neighbourhood, which is legal.

‘The pine-apples I directed to be sent home by parcels delivery, but the clerk of the docks said, “Not it, it’ll have to go by van ;” and it was certainly a very large cask. At five shillings a pine-apple I reckoned, roughly, its contents would about defray the dock dues.

‘It is customary with persons of my profession to talk darkly about their office secrets. “You have no idea,” they say, “what strange things come under our professional eye.” But I never had

anything in my office which excited a greater amazement than that turtle, especially among the junior clerks. Some supposed it to be a household pet that I could not bear out of my sight, and which I should bring with me to business every day : others that I had taken it in liquidation of a bad debt from a house in the West India trade. A lady client in a delicate situation, who came to consult me upon a succession case, was seriously alarmed by the quadruped, whom I had placed for security in the wastepaper basket—so much so, indeed, that the succession took subsequently quite a new direction. Altogether I was injured in my professional character by that animal, which, moreover, died in the basket.

“However, thank heaven,” thought I (though, as it turned out, I was acknowledging an obligation quite unnecessarily), “there are still those pine-apples.”

“The door was opened to me at home that evening by a policeman.

“Why are *you* here?” inquired I. “Where is John?”

“John is gone to the hospital, sir,” he replied, “being as fixed as—I don’t know what they call it.”

“What a frightful smell!” cried I; “you must mean asphyxiated. What *is* the matter?”

“Well, sir, your house is poisoned; that’s the long and short of it: your missus is very bad upstairs, and the maids—just listen to ’em!”

“While he was speaking I heard a succession of screams from the downstairs-premises. “What are they screaming at?” I exclaimed impatiently.

“I don’t know the name of ’em,” he replied, with that cautious stolidity peculiar to the Force, “but they have any number of legs.”

“The maids!” cried I. “Impossible!”

“No, sir; it is what has come with them pine-apples. They’re a mass of putrefaction, and have bred a pestilence and these things besides.”

“Are they cockroaches?”

“Cockroaches!” he echoed contemptuously; “worse than that.”

“Great heavens! they are not scorpions, surely?”

“Ay, summut o’ that. Forty-two and forty-three have been at ’em with a hatchet these two hours. The cook and housemaid are attached to those two, or would have fled with the other servants. As for me, I am seeing they don’t get upstairs. Here’s one on ’em.”

“As he spoke, an enormous centipede wriggled into the hall

from the kitchen stairs. The policeman drew his truncheon, and, after a hand-to-hand conflict which reminded one of St. George and the dragon, subdued it by cutting off its head.

'The scene below-stairs beggars description. The two maids were standing on the dresser, screaming, and the two policemen, one with the kitchen poker and the other with the chopper, were engaged with a legion of abominable reptiles. They worked like Samson with his jaw-bone, but at least one of those centipedes survived the massacre. I say *one*, because I am of a sanguine disposition; I can't say less than one, because I have seen a centipede in the house since very often, and in all sorts of places. My impression is that two escaped the general slaughter, and that they have an increasing family.

'Can you wonder now,' said my honest lawyer in conclusion, 'that I regret being "found out" (I mean as to honesty) and being so "much respected"? If I had not saved that man in St. Kitt's from the gallows—however, that's not the point; I mean generally, if I had not succoured the widow and the orphan, I should not have exposed myself to their generosity. It is their gifts that make life unendurable. I protest, when I come upon that familiar phrase, "Know all men by these presents," it gives me quite a turn.'

Supposed Changes in the Moon.

BY RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

IN this Magazine for August last I considered the moon's multitudinous small craters with special reference to the theory that some among those small craters may have been produced by the downfall of aerolithic or meteoric masses upon the moon's once plastic surface. Whether it be considered probable that this is really the case or not with regard to actually existent lunar craters, it cannot be doubted that during one period of the moon's history, a period probably lasting many millions of years, many crater-shaped depressions must have been produced in this way. As I showed in that essay, it is absolutely certain that thousands of meteoric masses, large enough to form visible depressions where they fell, must have fallen during the moon's plastic era. It is certain also that that era must have been very long-lasting. Nevertheless, it remains possible (many will consider it extremely probable, if not absolutely certain) that during sequent periods all such traces were removed. There is certainly nothing in the aspect of the present lunar craters, even the smallest and most numerous, to preclude the possibility that they, like the larger ones, were the results of purely volcanic action; and to many minds it seems preferable to adopt one general theory respecting all such objects as may be classed in a regular series, than to consider that some members of the series are to be explained in one way and others in a different way. We can form a series extending without break or interruption from the largest lunar craters, more than a hundred miles in diameter, to the smallest visible craters, less than a quarter of a mile across, or even to far smaller craters, if increase of telescopic power should reveal such. And therefore many object to adopt any theory in explanation of the smaller craters (or some of them) which could manifestly not be extended to the largest. Albeit we must remember that certainly if any small craters had been formed during the plastic era by meteoric downfall, and had remained unchanged after the moon solidified, it would now be quite impossible to distinguish these from craters formed in the ordinary manner.

While we thus recognise the possibility, at any rate, that multitudes of small lunar craters, say from a quarter of a mile to two miles in diameter, may have been formed by falling meteoric masses hundreds of millions of years ago, and may have remained

unchanged even until now, we perceive that on the moon later processes must have formed many small craters, precisely as such small craters have been formed on our own earth. I considered, at the close of the essay above mentioned, the two stages of the moon's development which must have followed the period during which her surface was wholly or in great part plastic. First, there was the stage during which the crust contracted more rapidly than the nucleus, and was rent from time to time as though the nucleus were expanding within it. Secondly, there came the era when the nucleus, having retained a greater share of heat, began to cool, and therefore to contract more quickly than the crust, so that the crust became wrinkled or corrugated, as it followed up (so to speak) the retreating nucleus.

It would be in the later part of this second great era that the moon (if ever) would have resembled the earth. The forms of volcanic activity still existing on the earth seem most probably referable to the gradual contraction of the nucleus, and the steady resulting contraction of the rocky crust. As Mallet and Dana have shown, the heat resulting from the contraction, or in reality from the slow downfall of the crust, is amply sufficient to account for the whole observed volcanian energy of the earth. It has indeed been objected that if this theory (which is considered more fully in my '*Pleasant Ways in Science*') were correct, we ought to find volcanoes occurring indifferently, or at any rate volcanic phenomena of various kinds so occurring, in all parts of the earth's surface, and not prevalent in special regions and scarcely ever noticed elsewhere. But this objection is based on erroneous ideas as to the length of time necessary for the development of subterranean changes, and also as to the extent of regions which at present find in certain volcanic craters a sufficient outlet for their subterranean fires. It is natural that, if a region of wide extent has at any time been relieved at some point, that spot should long afterwards remain as an outlet, a sort of safety-valve, which, by yielding somewhat more quickly than any neighbouring part of the crust, would save the whole region from destructive earthquakes; and though in the course of time a crater which had acted such a part would cease to do so, yet the period required for such a change would be very long indeed compared with those periods by which men ordinarily measure time. Moreover, it by no means follows that every part of the earth's crust would even require an outlet for heat developed beneath it. Over wide tracts of the earth's surface the rate of contraction may be such, or may be so related to the thickness of the crust, that the heat developed can find ready escape by conduction to the surface, and by radiation thence into space.

Nay, from the part which water is known to play in producing volcanic phenomena, it may well be that in every region where water does not find its way in large quantities to the parts in which the subterranean heat is great, no volcanic action results. Mallet, following other experienced vulcanologists, lays down the law, 'Without water there can be no volcano'; so that the neighbourhood of large oceans, as well as special conditions of the crust, must be regarded as probably essential to the existence of such outlets as Vesuvius, Etna, Hecla, and the rest.

So much premised, let us enquire whether it is antecedently likely that in the moon volcanic action may still be in progress, and afterwards consider the recent announcement of a lunar disturbance, which, if really volcanic, certainly indicates volcanic action [far more intense than any which is at present taking place in our own earth. I have already, I may remark, considered the evidence respecting this new lunar crater which some suppose to have been formed during the last two years. But I am not here going over the same ground as in my former paper ('Contemporary Review' for August, 1878). Moreover, since that paper was written, new evidence has been obtained, and I am now able to speak with considerable confidence about points which were in some degree doubtful three months ago.

Let us consider, in the first place, what is the moon's probable age, not in years, but in development. Here we have only probable evidence to guide us, evidence chiefly derived from the analogy of our own earth. At least, we have only such evidence when we are enquiring into the moon's age as a preliminary to the consideration of her actual aspect and its meaning. No doubt many features revealed by telescopic scrutiny are full of significance in this respect. No one who has ever looked at the moon, indeed, with a telescope of great power has failed to be struck by the appearance of deadness which her surface presents, or to be impressed (at a first view, in any case) with the idea that he is looking at a world whose period of life must be set in a very remote antiquity. But we must not take such considerations into account in discussing the *à priori* probability that the moon is a very aged world. Thus we have only evidence from analogy to guide us in this part of our enquiry. I note the point at starting, because the indicative mood is so much more convenient than the conditional, that I may frequently in this part of my enquiry use the former where the actual nature of the evidence would only justify the latter. Let it be understood that the force of the reasoning here depends entirely on the weight we are disposed to allow to arguments from analogy.

Assuming the planets and satellites of the solar system to be formed in some such manner as Laplace suggested in his 'Nebular Hypothesis,' the moon, as an orb travelling round the earth, must be regarded as very much older than she is, even in years. Even if we accept the theory of accretion which has been recently suggested as better according with known facts, it would still follow that probably the moon had existence, as a globe of matter nearly of her present size, long before the earth had gathered in the major portion of her substance. Necessarily, therefore, if we assume as far more probable than either theory that the earth and moon attained their present condition by combined processes of condensation and accretion, we should infer that the moon is far the older of the two bodies in years.

But if we even suppose that the earth and moon began their career as companion planets at about the same epoch, we should still have reason to believe that these planets, equal though they were in age so far as mere years are concerned, must be very unequally advanced so far as development is concerned, and must therefore in that respect be of very unequal age.

It was, I believe, Sir Isaac Newton who first called attention to the circumstance that the larger a planet is, the longer will be the various stages of its existence. He used the same reasoning which was afterwards urged by Buffon, and suggested an experiment which Buffon was the first to carry out. If two globes of iron, of unequal size, be heated to the same degree, and then left to cool side by side, it will be found that the larger glows with a ruddy light after the smaller has become quite dark, and that the larger remains intensely hot long after the smaller has become cool enough to be handled. The reason of the difference is very readily recognised. Indeed, Newton perceived that there would be such a difference before the matter had been experimentally tested. The quantity of heat in the unequal globes is proportional to the volume, the substance of each being the same. The heat is emitted from the surface, and at a rate depending on the extent of surface. But the volume of the larger exceeds that of the smaller in greater degree than the surface of the larger exceeds the surface of the other. Suppose, for instance, the larger has a diameter twice as great as that of the smaller, its surface is four times as great as that of the smaller, its volume eight times as great. Having, then, eight times as much heat as the smaller at the beginning, and parting with that heat only four times as fast as the smaller, the supply necessarily lasts twice as long; or, more exactly, each stage in the cooling of the larger lasts twice as long as the corresponding stage in the cooling of the smaller.

We see that the duration of the heat is greater for the larger in the same degree that the diameter is greater. And we should have obtained the same result whatever diameters we had considered. Suppose, for instance, we heat two globes of iron, one an inch in diameter, the other seven inches, to a white heat. The surface of the larger is forty-nine times that of the smaller, and thus it gives out at the beginning, and at each corresponding stage of cooling, forty-nine times as much heat as the smaller. But it possesses at the beginning three hundred and forty-three (seven times seven times seven) times as much heat. Consequently, the supply will last seven times as long, precisely as a stock of three hundred and forty-three thousand pounds, expended forty-nine times as fast as a stock of one thousand pounds only, would last seven times as long. In every case we find that the duration of the heat-emission for globes of the same material equally heated at the outset is proportional to their diameters.

Now, before applying this result to the case of the moon, we must take into account two considerations:—First, the probability that when the moon was formed she was not nearly so hot as the earth when it first took planetary shape; and secondly, the different densities of the earth and moon.

The original heat of every member of the solar system, including the sun, depended on the gravitating energy of its own mass. The greater that energy, the greater the heat generated either by the process of steady contraction imagined in Laplace's theory, or by the process of meteoric indraught imagined in the aggregation theory. To show how very different are the heat-generating powers of two very unequal masses, consider what would happen if the earth drew down to its own surface a meteoric mass which had approached the earth under her own attraction only. (The case is of course purely imaginary, because no meteor can approach the earth which has not been subjected to the far greater attractive energy of the sun, and does not possess a velocity far greater than any which the earth herself could impart.) In this case such a mass would strike the earth with a velocity of about seven miles per second, and the heat generated would be that due to this velocity only. Now, when a meteor strikes the sun full tilt after a journey from the star depths under his attraction, it reaches his surface with a velocity of nearly three hundred and sixty miles per second. The heat generated is nearly fifty times greater than in the imagined case of the earth. The moon being very much less than the earth, the velocity she can impart to meteoric bodies is still less. It amounts, in fact, to only about a mile per second. The condensing energy of the moon in her vaporous era was in

like manner far less than that of the earth, and consequently far less heat was then generated. Thus, although we might well believe on *à priori* grounds, even if not assured by actual study of the lunar features, that the moon when first formed as a planet had a surface far hotter than molten iron, we must yet believe that, when first formed, the moon had a temperature very much below that of our earth at the corresponding stage of her existence.

On this account, then, we must consider that the moon started in planetary existence in a condition as to heat which our earth did not attain till many millions, probably hundreds of millions of years after the epoch of her first formation as a planet.

As regards the moon's substance, we have no means of forming a satisfactory opinion. But we shall be safe in regarding quantity of matter in the moon as a safer basis of calculation than volume, in comparing the duration of her various stages of development with those of our own earth. When, in the August number of this Magazine, I adopted a relation derived from the latter and less correct method, it was because the more correct method gave the result most favourable to the argument I was then considering. The same is indeed the case now. Yet it will be better to adopt the more exact method, because the consideration relates no longer to a mere side issue, but belongs to the very essence of my reasoning.

The moon has a mass equal to about one eighty-first part of the earth's. Her diameter being less than the earth's, about as two to seven, the duration of each stage of her cooling would be in this degree less than the corresponding duration for the earth, if her density were the same as the earth's, in which case her mass would be only one forty-ninth part of the earth's. But her mass being so much less, we must assume that her amount of heat at any given stage of cooling was less in similar degree than it would have been had her density been the same as the earth's. We may, in fact, assume that the moon's total supply of heat would be only one eighty-first of the earth's if the two bodies were at the same temperature throughout.¹ But the surface of the moon is between one-thirteenth and one-fourteenth of the earth's. Since, then, the earth at any given stage of cooling parted with her heat between thirteen and

¹ To some this may appear to be a mere truism. In reality it is far from being so. If two globes of equal mass were each of the same exact temperature throughout, they might yet have very unequal total quantities of heat. If one were of water, for instance, and the other of iron or any other metal, the former would have far the larger supply of heat; for more heat is required to raise a given weight of water one degree in temperature, than to raise an equal weight of iron one degree; and water in cooling one degree, or any number of degrees, would give out more heat than an equal weight of iron cooling to the same extent.

fourteen times⁷ as fast as the moon, but had about eighty-one times as much heat to part with (for that stage), it follows that she would take about six times as long (six times thirteen and a-half is equal to eighty-one) to cool through that particular stage as the moon would.

If we take this relation as the basis of our estimate of the moon's age, we shall find that, even if the moon's existence as a planet began simultaneously with the earth's instead of many millions of years earlier, even if the moon was then as hot as the earth instead of being so much cooler that many millions of years would be required for the earth to cool to the same temperature—making, I say, these assumptions, which probably correspond to the omission of hundreds of millions of years in our estimate of the moon's age, we shall still find the moon to be hundreds of millions of years older than the earth.

Nay, we may even take a position still less favourable to my argument. Let us overlook the long ages during which the two orbs were in the vaporous state, and suppose the earth and moon to be simultaneously in that stage of planetary existence when the surface has a temperature of two thousand degrees Centigrade.

From Bischoff's experiments on the cooling of rocks, it appears to follow that some three hundred and twenty millions of years must have elapsed between the time when the earth's surface was at this temperature and the time when the surface temperature was reduced to two hundred degrees Centigrade, or one hundred and eighty degrees Fahrenheit above the boiling point. The earth was for that enormous period a mass (in the main) of molten rock. In the moon's case this period lasted only one-sixth of three hundred and twenty million years, or about fifty-three million years, leaving two hundred and sixty-seven million years' interval between the time when the moon's surface had cooled down to two hundred degrees Centigrade and the later epoch when the earth's surface had attained that temperature.

I would not, however, insist on these numerical details. It has always seemed to me unsafe to base calculations respecting suns and planets on experiments conducted in the laboratory. The circumstances under which the heavenly bodies exist, regarding these bodies as wholes, are utterly unlike any which can be produced in the laboratory, no matter on what scale the experimenter may carry on his researches. I have often been amused to see even mathematicians of repute employing a formula based on terrestrial experiments, physical, optical, and otherwise, as though the formula were an eternal omnipresent reality, without noting that, *if similarly applied to obtain other determinations, the most stupen-*

dously absurd results would be deduced. It is as though, having found that a child grows three inches in the fifth year of his age, one should infer not only that that person but every other person in every age and in every planet, nay, in the whole universe, would be thirty inches taller at the age of fifteen than at the age of five, without noticing that the same method of computation would show everyone to be more than fifteen feet taller at the age of sixty-five. It may well be that, instead of three hundred and twenty millions of years, the era considered by Bischoff lasted less than a hundred millions of years. Or quite as probably it may have lasted five or six hundred millions of years. And again, instead of the corresponding era of the moon's past history having lasted one-sixth of the time required to produce the same change in the earth's condition, it may have lasted a quarter, or a third, or even half that time, though quite as probably it may have lasted much less than a sixth. But in any case we cannot reasonably doubt that the moon reached the stage of cooling through which the earth is now passing many millions of years ago. We shall not probably err very greatly in taking the interval as at least two hundred millions of years.

But I could point out that in reality it is a matter of small importance, so far as my present argument is concerned, whether we adopt Bischoff's period or a period differing greatly from it. For if instead of about three hundred millions the earth required only thirty millions of years to cool from a surface temperature of two thousand degrees Centigrade to a temperature of two hundred degrees, we must assume that the rate of cooling is ten times greater than Bischoff supposed. And we must of course extend the same assumption to the moon. Now, since the sole question before us is to what degree the moon has cooled, it matters nothing whether we suppose the moon has been cooling very slowly during many millions of years since she was in the same condition as the earth at present, or that the moon has been cooling ten times as quickly during a tenth part of the time, or a hundred times as quickly during one-hundredth part of the time.

We may, therefore, continue to use the numbers resulting from Bischoff's calculation, even though we admit the probability that they differ widely from the true values of the periods we are considering.

Setting the moon, then, as about two hundred and fifty millions of years in advance of the earth in development, even when we overlook all the eras preceding that considered by Bischoff, and the entire sequent interval (which must be long, for the earth has no longer a surface one hundred degrees Centigrade hotter than

boiling water), let us consider what is suggested by this enormous time-difference.

In the first place, it corresponds to a much greater interval in our earth's history. During the two hundred and fifty millions of years the moon has been cooling at her rate, not at the earth's. According to the conclusion we deduced from the moon's relative mass and surface, she has aged as much during those two hundred and fifty million years as the earth will during the next fifteen hundred million years.

Now, however slowly we suppose the earth's crust to be changing, it must be admitted that in the course of the next fifteen hundred millions of years the earth will have parted with far the greater part, if not with the whole, of that inherent heat on which the present movements of her surface depend. We know that these movements at once depend upon and indicate processes of contraction. We know that such processes cannot continue at their present rate for many millions of years. If we assume that the rate of contraction will steadily diminish—which is equivalent, be it noticed, to the assumption that the earth's vulcanian or subterranean energies will be diminished—the duration of the process will be greater. But even on such an assumption, controlled by consideration of the evidence we have respecting the rate at which terrestrial contraction is diminishing, it is certain that long before a period of fifteen hundred millions of years has elapsed the process of contraction will to all intents and purposes be completed.

We must assume, then, as altogether the most probable view, that the moon has reached this stage of planetary decrepitude, even if she has not become an absolutely dead world. We can hardly reject the reasoning which would show that the moon is far older than has been assumed when long stages of her history and our earth's have been neglected. Still less reasonable would it be to reject the conclusion that at the very least she has reached the hoar antiquity thus inferred. Assuming her to be no older, we yet cannot escape the conviction that her state is that of utter decrepitude. To suppose that volcanic action can now be in progress on the moon, even to as great a degree as on the earth, would be to assume that measurable sources of energy can produce practically immeasurable results. But no volcanic changes now in process on the earth could possibly be discernible at the moon's distance. How utterly unlikely does it seem, then, that any volcanic changes can be now taking place on the moon which could be recognised from the earth! It seems safe to assume that no volcanic changes at all can be in progress; but most certainly the

evidence which should convince us that volcanic changes of so tremendous a character are in progress that at a distance of two hundred and sixty thousand miles terrestrial telescopists can discern them, must be of the strongest and most satisfactory character.

Evidence of change may indeed be discovered which can be otherwise explained. The moon is exposed to the action of heat other than that which pervaded her own frame at the time of her first formation. The sun's heat is poured upon the moon during the long lunar day of more than a fortnight, while during the long lunar night a cold prevails which must far exceed that of our bitterest arctic winters. We know from the heat-measurements made by the present Lord Rosse, that any part of the moon's surface at lunar mid-day is fully five hundred degrees Fahrenheit hotter than the same part two weeks later at lunar midnight. The alternate expansions and contractions resulting from these changes of temperature cannot but produce changes, however slowly, in the contour of the moon's surface. Professor Newcomb, indeed, considers that all such changes must long since have been completed. But I cannot see how they can be completed so long as the moon's surface is uneven, and at present there are regions where that surface is altogether rugged. Mighty peaks and walls exist which must one day be thrown down, so unstable is their form; deep ravines can be seen which must one day be the scene of tremendous landslips, so steep and precipitous are their sides. Changes such as these may still occur on so vast a scale that telescopists may hope from time to time to recognise them. But changes such as these are not volcanic; they attest no lunar vitality. They are antecedently so probable, indeed, while volcanic changes are antecedently so unlikely, that when any change is clearly recognised in the moon's surface, nothing but the most convincing evidence could be accepted as demonstrating that the change was of volcanic origin and not due to the continued expansion and contraction of the lunar crust.

And now let us see how stands the evidence in the few cases which seem most to favour the idea that a real change has taken place.

We may dismiss, in the first place, without any hesitation, the assertion that regular changes take place in the floor of the great lunar crater Plato. According to statements very confidently advanced a few years ago, this wide circular plain, some sixty miles in diameter, grows darker and darker as the lunar day advances there, until the time corresponding to about two o'clock in the afternoon, and then grows gradually lighter again till eventide.

The idea seems to have been at first that some sort of vegetation exists on the floor of this mighty ring-shaped mountain, and that, as the sun's heat falls during the long lunar day upon the great plain, the vegetation flourishes, darkening the whole region just as we might imagine that some far-extending forest on the earth would appear darker as seen from the moon when fully clothed with vegetation than when the trees were bare and the lighter tints of the ground could be seen through them. Another idea was that the ground undergoes some change under the sun's heat corresponding to those which are produced in certain substances employed in photography ; though it was not explained why the solar rays should produce no permanent change, as in the terrestrial cases adduced in illustration. Yet another and, if possible, an even stranger explanation, suggested that, though the moon has no seas, there may be large quantities of water beneath her crust, which may evaporate when that crust becomes heated, rising in the form of vapour to moisten and so darken the crust. Certainly, the idea of a moistening of the lunar crust, or of portions thereof, as the sun's rays fall more strongly upon it, is so daring that one could almost wish it were admissible, instead of being altogether inconsistent, as unfortunately it is, with physical possibilities.

But, still more unfortunately, the fact supposed to have been observed, on which these ingenious speculations were based, has not only been called in question, but has been altogether negatived. More exact observations have shown that the supposed darkening of the floor of Plato is a mere optical illusion. When the sun has lately risen at that part of the moon, the ringed wall surrounding this great plain throws long shadows across the level surface. These shadows are absolutely black, like all the shadows on the moon. By contrast, therefore, the unshadowed part of the floor appears lighter than it really is ; but the mountain ring which surrounds this dark grey plain is of light tint. So soon as the sun has passed high above the horizon of this region, the ring appears very brilliant compared with the dark plain which it surrounds ; thus the plain appears by comparison even darker than it really is. As the long lunar afternoon advances, however, black shadows are again thrown athwart the floor, which therefore again appears by contrast lighter than it really is. All the apparent changes are such as might have been anticipated by anyone who considered how readily the eye is misled by effects of contrast.

To base any argument in favour of a regular change in the floor of Plato on evidence such as this, would be as unwise as it would be to deduce inferences as to changes in the heat of water from experiments in which the heat was determined by the sensa-

tions experienced when the hands were successively immersed, one hand having previously been in water as hot as could be borne, the other in water as cold as could be borne. We know how readily these sensations would deceive us (if we trusted them) into the belief that the water had warmed notably during the short interval of time which had elapsed between the two immersions; for we know that if both hands were immersed at the same moment in lukewarm water, the water would appear cold to one hand and warm to the other.

Precisely as in such a case as we have just considered, if we were obliged to test the water by so inexact a method, we should make experiments with one hand only, and carefully consider the condition of that hand during the progress of the experiments, so in the case of the floor of Plato, we must exclude as far as possible all effects due to mere contrast. We must examine the tint of the plain, at lunar morning, mid-day, and evening, with an eye not affected either by the darkness or brightness of adjacent regions, or adjacent parts of the same region. This is very readily done. All we have to do is to reduce the telescopic field of view to such an extent that, instead of the whole floor, only a small portion can be seen. It will then be found, as I can myself certify (the more confidently because the experience of others confirms my own), that the supposed change of tint does not take place. One or two who were and are strong believers in the reality of the change do indeed assert that they have tried this experiment, and have obtained an entirely different result. But this may fairly be regarded as showing how apt an observer is to be self-deceived when he is entirely persuaded of the truth of some favourite theory. For those who carried out the experiment successfully had no views one way or the other; those only failed who were certainly assured beforehand that the experiment would confirm their theory.

The case of the lunar crater Linné, which somewhere about November 1865 attracted the attention of astronomers, belongs to a very different category. In my article on the moon in the 'Contemporary Review' I have fully presented the evidence in the case of this remarkable object. I need not therefore consider here the various arguments which have been urged for and against the occurrence of change. I may mention, however, that, in my anxiety to do full justice to the theory that change has really occurred, I took Mädler's description of the crater's interior as 'very deep,' to mean more than Mädler probably intended. There is now a depression several hundred yards in depth. If Mädler's description be interpreted, as I interpreted it for the occasion in the above article, to mean a depth of two or three miles, it is of course certain

that there has been a very remarkable change. But some of the observers who have devoted themselves utterly, it would seem, to the lively occupation of measuring, counting, and describing the tens of thousands of lunar craters already known, assert that Mädler and Lohrman (who uses the same description) meant nothing like so great a depth. Probably Mädler only meant about half a mile, or even less. In this case their favourite theory no longer seems so strongly supported by the evidence. In some old drawings by the well-known observer Schröter, the crater is drawn very much as it now appears. Thus, I think we must adopt as most probable the opinion which is, I see, advanced by Prof. Newcomb in his excellent 'Popular Astronomy,' that there has been no actual change in the crater. I must indeed remark that, after comparing several drawings of the same regions by Schröter, Mädler, Lohrman, and Schmidt, with each other and with the moon's surface, I find myself by no means very strongly impressed by the artistic skill of any of these observers. I scarcely know a single region in the moon where change might not be inferred to have taken place if any one of the above-named observers could be implicitly relied upon. As, fortunately, their views differ even more widely *inter se* than from the moon's own surface, we are not driven to so startling a conclusion.

However, if we assume even that Linné has undergone change, we still have no reason to believe that the change is volcanic. A steep wall, say half a mile in height, surrounding a crater four or five miles in diameter, no longer stands at this height above the enclosed space, if the believers in a real change are to be trusted. But, as Dr. Huggins well remarked long ago, if volcanic forces competent to produce disturbance of this kind are at work in the moon, we ought more frequently to recognise signs of change, for they could scarcely be at work in one part only of the moon's surface, or only at long intervals of time. It is so easy to explain the overthrow of such a wall as surrounded Linné (always assuming we can rely upon former accounts) without imagining volcanic action, that, considering the overwhelming weight of *à priori* probability against such action at the present time, it would be very rash to adopt the volcanic theory. The expansions and contractions described above would not only be able to throw down walls of the kind, but they would be sure to do so from time to time. Indeed, as a mere matter of probabilities, it may be truly said that it would be exceedingly unlikely that catastrophes such as the one which may have occurred in this case would fail to happen at comparatively short intervals of time. It would be so unlikely, that I am almost disposed to adopt the

theory that there really has been a change in Linné, for the reason that on that theory we get rid of the difficulty arising from the apparent fixity of even the steepest lunar rocks. However, after all, the time during which men have studied the moon with the telescope—only two hundred and sixty-nine years—is a mere instant compared with the long periods during which the moon has been exposed to the sun's intense heat by day and a more than arctic intensity of cold by night. It may well be that, though lunar landslips occur at short intervals of time, these intervals are only short when compared with those periods, hundreds of millions of years long, of which we had to speak a little while ago. Perhaps in a period of ten or twenty thousand years we might have a fair chance of noting the occurrence of one or two catastrophes of the kind, whereas we could hardly expect to note any, save by the merest accident, in two or three hundred years.

To come now to the last, and, according to some, the most decisive piece of evidence in favour of the theory that the moon's crust is still under the influence of volcanic forces.

On May 19, 1877, Dr. Hermann J. Klein, of Cologne, observed a crater more than two miles in width, where he felt sure that no crater had before existed. It was near the centre of the moon's visible hemisphere, and not far from a well-known crater called Hyginus. At the time of observation it was not far from the boundary between the light and dark parts of the moon: in fact, it was near the time of sunrise at this region. Thus the floor of the supposed new crater was in shadow—it appeared perfectly black. In the conventional language for such cases made and provided (it should be stereotyped by selenographers, for it has now been used a great many times since Schröter first adopted the belief that the great crater Cassini, thirty-six miles in diameter, was a new one) Dr. Klein says, 'The region having been frequently observed by myself during the last few years, I feel certain that no such crater existed in the region at the time of my previous observations.' He communicated his discovery to Dr. Schmidt, who also assured him that the region had been frequently observed by himself during the last few years, and he felt certain that no such crater, &c. &c. It is not in the maps by Lohrman and by Beer and Mädler, or in Schröter's drawings, and so forth. 'We know more,' says a recent writer, singularly ready to believe in lunar changes; 'we know that at a later period, with the powerful Dorpat telescope, Mädler carefully re-examined this particular region, to see if he could detect any additional features not shown in his map. He found several smaller craterlets *in other parts*' (the italics are mine), 'but he could not detect any other crater

in the region where Dr. Klein now states there exists a large crater, though he did find some very small hills close to this spot.' 'This evidence is really conclusive,' says this very confident writer, 'for it is incredible that Mädler could have seen these minute hills and overlooked a crater so large that it is the second largest crater of the score in this region.' Then this writer comes in, of course, in his turn, with the customary phrases. 'During the six years, 1870-1876, I most carefully examined this region, for the express purpose of detecting any craters not shown by Mädler,' and he also can certify that no such crater existed, &c. &c. He was only waiting, when he thus wrote, to see the crater for himself. 'One suitable evening will settle the matter. If I find a deep black crater, three miles in diameter, in the place assigned to it by Dr. Klein, and when six years' observation convinces me no such crater did exist, I shall know that it must be new.'

Astronomers, however, require somewhat better evidence.

It might well be that a new crater-shaped depression should appear in the moon without any volcanic action having occurred. For reasons already adduced, indeed, I hold it to be to all intents and purposes certain that if a new depression is really in question at all, it is in reality only an old and formerly shallow crater, whose floor has broken up, yielding at length to the expansive and contractive effects above described, which would act with exceptional energy at this particular part of the moon's surface, close as it is to the lunar equator.

But it is by no means clear that this part of the moon's surface has undergone any change whatever. We must not be misled by the very confident tone of selenographers. Of course they fully believe what they tell us: but they are strongly prejudiced. Their labours, as they well know, have *now* very little interest unless signs of change should be detected in the moon. Surveyors who have done exceedingly useful work in mapping a region would scarcely expect the public to take much interest in additional information about every rock or pebble existing in that region, unless they could show that something more than a mere record of rocks and pebbles was really involved. Thus selenographers have shown, since the days of Schröter, an intense anxiety to prove that our moon deserves, in another than Juliet's sense, to be called 'the inconstant moon.' In another sense again they seem disposed to 'swear by the inconstant moon,' as changing yearly, if not 'monthly, in her circled orb.' Thus a very little evidence satisfies them, and they are very readily persuaded in their own mind that former researches of theirs, or of their fellow-pebble-counters, have been so close and exact, that craters must

have been detected then which have been found subsequently to exist in the moon. I do not in the slightest degree question their *bona fides*, but a long experience of their ways leads me to place very little reliance on such stereotyped phrases as I have quoted above.

Now, in my paper in the 'Contemporary Review' on this particular crater, I called attention to the fact that in the magnificent photograph of the moon taken by Dr. Louis Rutherford on March 6, 1865 (note well the date), there is a small spot of lighter colour than the surrounding region, nearly in the place indicated in the imperfect drawing of Klein's record which alone was then available to me. For reasons, I did not then more closely describe this feature of the finest lunar photograph ever yet obtained.

The writer from whom I have already quoted is naturally (being a selenographer) altogether unwilling to accept the conclusion that this spot is the crater floor as photographed (not as seen) under a somewhat higher illumination than that under which the floor of the crater appears dark. There are several white spots immediately around the dark crater, he says: 'which of these is the particular white spot which the author' (myself) 'assumes I did not see?' a question which, as I had made no assumption whatever about this particular writer, nor mentioned him, nor even thought of him, as I wrote the article on which he comments, I am quite unable to answer. But he has no doubt that I have 'mistaken the white spot' (which it seems he can identify, after all) 'for Klein's crater, which is many miles farther north, and which never does appear as a white spot: he has simply mistaken its place.'

I have waited, therefore, before writing this, until from my own observation, or from a drawing carefully executed by Dr. Klein, I might ascertain the exact place of the new crater. I could not, as it turned out, observe the new crater as a black spot myself, since the question was raised; for on the only available occasion I was away from home. But I now have before me Dr. Klein's carefully drawn map. In this I find the new crater placed not nearly, but *exactly* where Rutherford's crater appears. I say 'Rutherford's crater,' for the white spot is manifestly not merely a light tinted region on the darker background of the Sea of Vapours (as the region in which the crater has been found is called): it is a circular crater more than two miles in diameter; and the width of the crescent of shadow surrounding its eastern side shows that in March 1865, when Rutherford took that photograph, the crater was not (for its size) a shallow one, but deep.

Now, it is quite true that, to the eye, under high illumination, the floor of the crater does not appear lighter than the surrounding region; at least, not markedly so, for to my eye it appears slightly

SUPPOSED CHANGES IN THE MOON.

ter. But everyone knows that a photograph does not show all objects with the same depth of shading that they present to the naked eye. A somewhat dark green object will appear rather light in a photograph, while a somewhat light orange-yellow object will appear quite dark. We have only to assume that the floor of the supposed new crater has a greenish tinge (which is by no means uncommon) to understand why, although it is lost to ordinary vision when the Sea of Vapours is under full illumination, it yet presents in a photograph a decidedly lighter shade than the surrounding region.

I ought to mention that the writer from whom I have quoted is that all the photographs were examined and the different objects in this region identified within forty-eight hours of the time when Klein's letter reached England. He mentions also that he has himself personally examined them. Doubtless at that time the exact position of the supposed new crater was not known. By the way, it is strange, considering that the name Louis Rutherford is distinctly written in large letters upon the magnificent photograph in question, that a selenographer who has carefully examined that photograph should spell the name Rutherford. He must really not have done so, when on re-examining the picture he finds the name spelled Rutherford, that there has been any change, volcanic or otherwise, in the photograph.

In conclusion I would point out that another of these laborious crater-counters, in a paper recently written with the express purpose of advocating a closer and longer-continued scrutiny of the moon, makes a statement which is full of significance in connection with the subject of lunar changes. After quoting the opinion of a celebrated astronomer, that one might as well attempt to catalogue the pebbles on the sea-shore as the entire series of lunar craters down to the minutest visible with the most powerful telescope, he states that while on the one hand, out of thirty-two thousand eight hundred and fifty-six craters given in Schmidt's list, not more than two thousand objects have been entered in the gistry he has provided for the purpose (though he has been many years collecting materials for it from all sides); on the other hand, 'on comparing a few of these published objects with Schmidt's map, it has been found that some are not in it,'—a fact which he calls attention, 'not for the purpose of depreciating the latest selenographical work that has yet appeared, but for the advancement of selenography.' Truly, the fact is as significant as it is discouraging,—unless we are presently to be told that the craters which are not common to both series are to be regarded as new formations.

An Heiress of Red Dog.

BY BRET HARTE.

(The right of translation is reserved.)

THE first intimation given of the eccentricity of the testator was, I think, in the spring of 1854. He was at that time in possession of a considerable property, heavily mortgaged to one friend, and a wife of some attraction, on whose affections another friend held an encumbering lien. One day it was found that he had secretly dug, or caused to be dug, a deep trap before the front door of his dwelling, into which a few friends, in the course of the evening, casually and familiarly dropped. This circumstance, slight in itself, seemed to point to the existence of a certain humour in the man, which might eventually get into literature, although his wife's lover—a man of quick discernment, whose leg was broken by the fall—took other views. It was some weeks later, that, while dining with certain other friends of his wife, he excused himself from the table to quietly reappear at the front window with a three-quarter-inch hydraulic pipe, and a stream of water projected at the assembled company. An attempt was made to take public cognizance of this; but a majority of the citizens of Red Dog, who were not at the dinner, decided that a man had a right to choose his own methods of diverting his company. Nevertheless, there were some hints of his insanity; his wife recalled other acts clearly attributable to *dementia*; the crippled lover argued from his own experience that the integrity of her limbs could only be secured by leaving her husband's house; and the mortgagee, fearing a further damage to his property, foreclosed. But here the cause of all this anxiety took matters into his own hands, and disappeared.

When we next heard from him, he had, in some mysterious way, been relieved alike of his wife and property, and was living alone at Rockville fifty miles away, and editing a newspaper. But that originality he had displayed when dealing with the problems of his own private life, when applied to politics in the columns of the 'Rockville Vanguard,' was singularly unsuccessful. An amusing exaggeration, purporting to be an exact account of the manner in which the opposing candidate had murdered his Chinese laundryman, was, I regret to say, answered only by assault and battery. A gratuitous and purely imaginative description of a great religious revival in Calamas, in which the sheriff of the

county—a notoriously profane sceptic—was alleged to have been the chief exhorter, resulted only in the withdrawal of the county advertising from the paper. In the midst of this practical confusion he suddenly died. It was then discovered, as a crowning proof of his absurdity, that he had left a will, bequeathing his entire effects to a freckle-faced maid-servant at the Rockville Hotel. But that absurdity became serious when it was also discovered that among these effects were a thousand shares in the 'Rising Sun Mining Co.,' which, a day or two after his demise, and while people were still laughing at his grotesque benefaction, suddenly sprang into opulence and celebrity. Three millions of dollars was roughly estimated as the value of the estate thus wantonly sacrificed! For it is only fair to state, as a just tribute to the enterprise and energy of that young and thriving settlement, that there was not probably a single citizen who did not feel himself better able to control the deceased humourist's property. Some had expressed a doubt of their ability to support a family; others had felt perhaps too keenly the deep responsibility resting upon them when chosen from the panel as jurors, and had evaded their public duties; a few had declined office and a low salary; but no one shrank from the possibility of having been called upon to assume the functions of Peggy Moffat—the heiress.

The will was contested. First by the widow, who it now appeared had never been legally divorced from the deceased; next by four of his cousins, who awoke, only too late, to a consciousness of his moral and pecuniary worth. But the humble legatee—a singularly plain, unpretending, uneducated Western girl—exhibited a dogged pertinacity in claiming her rights. She rejected all compromises. A rough sense of justice in the community, while doubting her ability to take care of the whole fortune, suggested that she ought to be content with three hundred thousand dollars. 'She's bound to throw even *that* away on some derved skunk of a man, natoorally, but three millions is too much to give a chap for makin' her onhappy. It's offerin' a temptation to cussedness.' The only opposing voice to this counsel came from the sardonic lips of Mr. Jack Hamlin. 'Suppose,' suggested that gentleman, turning abruptly on the speaker; 'suppose, when you won twenty thousand dollars of me last Friday night—suppose that instead of handing you over the money as I did—suppose I'd got up on my hind legs and said, "Look yer, Bill Wethersbee, you're a damned fool. If I give ye that twenty thousand you'll throw it away in the first skin-game in 'Frisco, and hand it over to the first short card-sharp you'll meet. There's a thousand—enough for you to fling away—take it and get!" Suppose what I'd said to you was the frozen truth,

and you'd know'd it—would that have been the square thing to play on you?' But here Wethersbee quickly pointed out the inefficiency of the comparison by stating that *he* had won the money fairly with a *stake*. 'And how do you know,' demanded Hamlin savagely, bending his black eyes on the astounded casuist, 'how do you know that the gal hezn't put down a stake?' The man stammered an unintelligible reply. The gambler laid his white hand on Wethersbee's shoulder. 'Look yer, old man,' he said, 'every gal stakes her *whole* pile—you can bet your life on that—whatever's her little game. If she took to keerds instead of her feelings—if she'd put up 'chips' instead o' body and soul, she'd bust every bank 'twixt this and 'Frisco! You hear me?'

Somewhat of this idea was conveyed, I fear not quite as sentimentally, to Peggy Moffat herself. The best legal wisdom of San Francisco retained by the widow and relatives, took occasion, in a private interview with Peggy, to point out that she stood in the quasi-criminal attitude of having unlawfully practised upon the affections of an insane elderly gentleman, with a view of getting possession of his property, and suggested to her that no vestige of her moral character would remain after the trial—if she persisted in forcing her claims to that issue. It is said that Peggy, on hearing this, stopped washing the plate she had in her hands, and, twisting the towel around her fingers, fixed her small pale blue eyes at the lawyer.

'And ez that the kind o' chirpin these critters keep up?'

'I regret to say, my dear young lady,' responded the lawyer, 'that the world is censorious. I must add,' he continued, with engaging frankness, 'that we professional lawyers are apt to study the opinion of the world, and that such will be the theory of—our side.'

'Then,' said Peggy stoutly, 'ez I allow I've got to go into Court to defend my character, I might as well pack in them three millions too.'

There is hearsay evidence that Peg added to this speech a wish and desire to 'bust the crust' of her traducers, and, remarking that 'that was the kind of hair-pin' she was, closed the conversation with an unfortunate accident to the plate, that left a severe contusion on the legal brow of her companion. But this story, popular in the bar-rooms and gulches, lacked confirmation in higher circles. Better authenticated was the legend related of an interview with her own lawyer. That gentleman had pointed out to her the advantage of being able to show some reasonable cause for the singular generosity of the testator.

'Although,' he continued, 'the law does not go back of the will for reason or cause for its provisions, it would be a strong

point with the judge and jury—particularly if the theory of insanity were set up—for us to show that the act was logical and natural. Of course you have—I speak confidently, Miss Moffat—certain ideas of your own why the late Mr. Byways was so singularly generous to you.’

‘No, I haven’t,’ said Peg decidedly.

‘Think again. Had he not expressed to you—you understand that this is confidential between us, although I protest, my dear young lady, that I see no reason why it should not be made public—had he not given utterance to sentiments of a nature consistent with some future matrimonial relations?’ But here Miss Peg’s large mouth, which had been slowly relaxing over her irregular teeth, stopped him.

‘If you mean he wanted to marry me—No!’

‘I see. But were there any conditions—of course you know the law takes no cognisance of any not expressed in the will; but still, for the sake of mere corroboration of the bequest—do you know of any conditions on which he gave you the property?’

‘You mean, did he want anything in return?’

‘Exactly, my dear young lady.’

Peg’s face on one side turned a deep magenta colour, on the other a lighter cherry, while her nose was purple, and her forehead an Indian red. To add to the effect of this awkward and discomposing dramatic exhibition of embarrassment, she began to wipe her hands on her dress, and sat silent.

‘I understand,’ said the lawyer hastily. ‘No matter—the conditions *were* fulfilled.’

‘No,’ said Peg amazedly; ‘how could they be until he was dead?’

It was the lawyer’s turn to colour and grow embarrassed.

‘He *did* say something, and make some conditions,’ continued Peg, with a certain firmness through her awkwardness; ‘but that’s nobody’s business but mine and his’n. And it’s no call o’ yours or theirs.’

‘But, my dear Miss Moffat, if these very conditions were proofs of his right mind, you surely would not object to make them known, if only to enable you to put yourself in a condition to carry them out.’

‘But,’ said Peg cunningly, ‘s’pose you and the court didn’t think ’em satisfactory? ’Spose you thought ’em *queer*? Eh?’

With this helpless limitation on the part of the defence, the case came to trial. Everybody remembers it: how for six weeks it was the daily food of Calaveras County; how for six weeks the *intellectual* and moral and spiritual competency of Mr. James

Byways to dispose of his property was discussed with learned and formal obscurity in the Court, and with unlettered and independent prejudice by camp fires and in bar-rooms. At the end of that time, when it was logically established that at least nine-tenths of the population of Calaveras were harmless lunatics, and everybody else's reason seemed to totter on its throne, an exhausted jury succumbed one day to the presence of Peg in the Court-room. It was not a prepossessing presence at any time; but the excitement, and an injudicious attempt to ornament herself, brought her defects into a glaring relief that was almost unreal. Every freckle on her face stood out and asserted itself singly; her pale blue eyes, that gave no indication of her force of character, were weak and wandering, or stared blankly at the judge; her over-sized head, broad at the base, terminating in the scantiest possible light-coloured braid in the middle of her narrow shoulders, was as hard and uninteresting as the wooden spheres that topped the railing against which she sat. The jury, who for six weeks had had her described to them by the plaintiffs as an arch, wily enchantress, who had sapped the failing reason of Jim Byways, revolted to a man. There was something so appallingly gratuitous in her plainness, that it was felt that three millions was scarcely a compensation for it. 'Ef that money was give to her, she earned it *sure*, boys; it wasn't no softness of the old man,' said the foreman. When the jury retired, it was felt that she had cleared her character. When they re-entered the room with their verdict, it was known that she had been awarded three millions damages for its defamation.

She got the money. But those who had confidently expected to see her squander it were disappointed. On the contrary, it was presently whispered that she was exceedingly penurious. That admirable woman, Mrs. Stiver of Red Dog, who accompanied her to San Francisco to assist her in making purchases, was loud in her indignation. 'She cares more for two bits¹ than I do for five dollars. She wouldn't buy anything at the "City of Paris" because it was "too expensive," and at last rigged herself out, a perfect guy, at some cheap slop-shops in Market Street. And after all the care Jane and me took of her, giving up our time and experience to her, she never so much as made Jane a single present.' Popular opinion, which regarded Mrs. Stiver's attention as purely speculative, was not shocked at this unprofitable dénouement; but when Peg refused to give anything to clear the mortgage off the new Presbyterian Church, and even declined to take shares in the Union Ditch, considered by many as an equally sacred and safe investment, she began to lose favour. Neverthe-

¹ i.e. 25 cents.

less, she seemed to be as regardless of public opinion as she had been before the trial; took a small house, in which she lived with an old woman who had once been a fellow-servant on, apparently, terms of perfect equality, and looked after her money. I wish I could say that she did this discreetly, but the fact is she blundered. The same dogged persistency she had displayed in claiming her rights was visible in her unsuccessful ventures. She sunk two hundred thousand dollars in a worn-out shaft originally projected by the deceased testator. She prolonged the miserable existence of the 'Rockville Vanguard' long after it had ceased to interest even its enemies; she kept the doors of the Rockville Hotel open when its custom had departed; she lost the coöperation and favour of a fellow capitalist through a trifling misunderstanding in which she was derelict and impenitent; she had three lawsuits on her hands that could have been settled for a trifle. I note these defects to show that she was by no means a heroine. I quote her affair with Jack Folinsbee to show that she was scarcely the average woman.

That handsome, graceless vagabond had struck the outskirts of Red Dog in a cyclone of dissipation which left him a stranded but still rather interesting wreck in a ruinous cabin not far from Peg Moffat's virgin bower. Pale, crippled from excesses, with a voice quite tremulous from sympathetic emotion more or less developed by stimulants, he lingered languidly, with much time on his hands, and only a few neighbours. In this fascinating kind of general *déshabille* of morals, dress, and the emotions, he appeared before Peg Moffat. More than that, he occasionally limped with her through the settlement. The critical eye of Red Dog took in the singular pair; Jack—voluble, suffering, apparently overcome by remorse, conscience, vituperation, and disease; and Peg, open-mouthed, high-coloured, awkward yet delighted; and the critical eye of Red Dog, seeing this, winked meaningly at Rockville. No one knew what passed between them. But all observed that one summer day Jack drove down the main street of Red Dog in an open buggy with the heiress of that town beside him. Jack, albeit a trifle shaky, held the reins with something of his old dash; and Mistress Peggy, in an enormous bonnet with pearl-coloured ribbons, a shade darker than her hair, holding in her short pink-gloved fingers a bouquet of yellow roses, absolutely glowed crimson in distressful gratification over the dash-board. So these two fared on—out of the busy settlement, into the woods, against the rosy sunset. Possibly it was not a pretty picture; nevertheless, as the dim aisles of the solemn pines opened to receive them, miners leaned upon their spades, and mechanics stopped in their toil to look after them. The critical eye of Red Dog, perhaps from the

sun, perhaps from the fact that it had itself once been young and dissipated, took on a kindly moisture as it gazed.

The moon was high when they returned. Those who had waited to congratulate Jack on this near prospect of a favourable change in his fortunes were chagrined to find that, having seen the lady safe home, he had himself departed from Red Dog. Nothing was to be gained from Peg, who on the next day and ensuing days kept the even tenor of her way, sunk a thousand or two more in unsuccessful speculation, and made no change in her habits of personal economy. Weeks passed without any apparent sequel to this romantic idyl. Nothing was known definitely until Jack, a month later, turned up in Sacramento, with a billiard cue in his hand, and a heart overcharged with indignant emotion. 'I don't mind saying to you, gentlemen, in confidence,' said Jack to a circle of sympathising players, 'I don't mind telling you regarding this thing, that I was as soft on that freckled-faced, red-eyed, tallow-haired gal, as if she'd been—a—a—an actress. And I don't mind saying, gentlemen, that, as far as I understand women, she was just as soft on me! You kin laugh, but it's so. One day I took her out buggy-riding—in style, too—and out on the road I offered to do the square thing—just as if she'd been a lady—offered to marry her then and there! And what did she do?' said Jack with an hysterical laugh—'why, blank it all! *offered me twenty-five dollars a week allowance—pay to be stopped when I wasn't at home!*' The roar of laughter that greeted this frank confession was broken by a quiet voice asking, 'And what did you say?' 'Say?' screamed Jack, 'I just told her to go to — with her money.' 'They say,' continued the quiet voice, 'that you asked her for the loan of two hundred and fifty dollars to get you to Sacramento—and that you got it?' 'Who says so?' roared Jack—'show me the blank liar.' There was a dead silence. Then the possessor of the quiet voice, Mr. Jack Hamlin, languidly reached under the table, took the chalk, and rubbing the end of his billiard cue, began with gentle gravity. 'It was an old friend of mine in Sacramento, a man with a wooden leg, a game eye, three fingers on his right hand, and a consumptive cough. Being unable naturally to back himself, he leaves things to me. So for the sake of argument,' continued Hamlin, suddenly laying down his cue, and fixing his wicked black eyes on the speaker, 'say it's me!'

I am afraid that this story, whether truthful or not, did not tend to increase Peg's popularity in a community where recklessness and generosity condoned for the absence of all the other virtues; and it is possible also that Red Dog was no more free from prejudice

than other more civilised but equally disappointed match-makers. Likewise, during the following year, she made several more foolish ventures and lost heavily. In fact, a feverish desire to increase her store at almost any risk seemed to possess her. At last it was announced that she intended to re-open the infelix Rockville Hotel, and keep it herself. Wild as this scheme appeared in theory, when put into practical operation there seemed to be some chance of success. Much, doubtless, was owing to her practical knowledge of hotel-keeping, but more to her rigid economy and untiring industry. The mistress of millions, she cooked, washed, waited on table, made the beds, and laboured like a common menial. Visitors were attracted by this novel spectacle. The income of the house increased as their respect for the hostess lessened. No anecdote of her avarice was too extravagant for current belief. It was even alleged that she had been known to carry the luggage of guests to their rooms, that she might anticipate the usual porter's gratuity. She denied herself the ordinary necessities of life. She was poorly clad, she was ill-fed—but the hotel was making money.

A few hinted at insanity; others shook their heads, and said a curse was entailed on the property. It was believed also, from her appearance, that she could not long survive this tax on her energies, and already there was discussion as to the probable final disposition of her property.

It was the particular fortune of Mr. Jack Hamlin to be able to set the world right on this and other questions regarding her.

A stormy December evening had set in when he chanced to be a guest of the Rockville Hotel. He had during the past week been engaged in the prosecution of his noble profession at Red Dog, and had, in the graphic language of a coadjutor, 'cleared out the town, except his fare in the pockets of the stage driver;' the Red Dog 'Standard' had bewailed his departure in playful obituary verse, beginning, 'Dearest Johnny, thou hast left us,' wherein the rhymes 'bereft us' and 'deplore' carried a vague allusion to 'a thousand dollars more.' A quiet contentment naturally suffused his personality, and he was more than usually 'lazy and deliberate in his speech. At midnight, when he was about to retire, he was a little surprised, however, by a tap on his door, followed by the presence of Mistress Peg Moffat—heiress and landlady of Rockville Hotel.

Mr. Hamlin, despite his previous defence of Peg, had no liking for her. His fastidious taste rejected her uncomeliness; his habits of thought and life were all antagonistic to what he had heard of her niggardliness and greed. As she stood there, in a dirty calico

wrapper, still redolent with the day's *cuisine*, crimson with embarrassment and the recent heat of the kitchen range, she certainly was not an alluring apparition. Happily for the lateness of the hour, her loneliness, and the infelix reputation of the man before her, she was at least a safe one. And I fear the very consciousness of this scarcely relieved her embarrassment.

'I wanted to say a few words to ye alone, Mr. Hamlin,' she began, taking an unoffered seat on the end of his portmanteau, 'or I shouldn't hev intruded. But it's the only time I can ketch you, or you me, for I'm down in the kitchen from sun-up till now.'

She stopped awkwardly, as if to listen to the wind which was rattling the windows, and spreading a film of rain against the opaque darkness without. Then, smoothing her wrapper over her knees, she remarked, as if opening a desultory conversation, 'Thar's a power of rain outside.'

Mr. Hamlin's only response to this meteorological observation was a yawn, and a preliminary tug at his coat as he began to remove it.

'I thought ye couldn't mind doin' me a favour,' continued Peg, with a hard, awkward laugh, 'partik'ly seein' ez folks allowed you'd sorter bin a friend o' mine, and hed stood up for me at times when you hedn't any partikler call to do it. I hevn't,' she continued, looking down on her lap, and following with her finger and thumb a seam of her gown, 'I hevn't so many friends ez slings a kind word for me these times that I disremember them.' Her under lip quivered a little here, and after vainly hunting for a forgotten handkerchief, she finally lifted the hem of her gown, wiped her snub nose upon it, but left the tears still in her eyes as she raised them to the man.

Mr. Hamlin, who had by this time divested himself of his coat, stopped unbuttoning his waistcoat, and looked at her.

'Like ez not thar'll be high water on the North Fork, ef this rain keeps on,' said Peg, as if apologetically, looking toward the window.

The other rain having ceased, Mr. Hamlin began to unbutton his waistcoat again.

'I wanted to ask ye a favour about Mr.—, about—Jack Folinsbee,' began Peg again, hurriedly. 'He's ailin' agin, and is mighty low. And he's losin' a heap o' money here and thar, and mostly to you. You cleaned him out of two thousand dollars last night—all he had.'

'Well?' said the gambler coldly.'

'Well, I thought ez you woz a friend o' mine, I'd ask ye to let

up a little on him,' said Peg, with an affected laugh. 'You kin do it. Don't let him play with ye.'

'Mistress Margaret Moffat,' said Jack, with lazy deliberation, taking off his watch and beginning to wind it up, 'ef you're that much stuck after Jack Folinsbee, *you* kin keep him off of me much easier than I kin. You're a rich woman! Give him enough money to break my bank, or break himself for good and all—but don't keep him forlin' round me, in hopes to make a raise. It don't pay, Mistress Moffat—it don't pay!'

A finer nature than Peg's would have misunderstood or resented the gambler's slang, and the miserable truths that underlay it. But she comprehended him instantly, and sat hopelessly silent.

'Ef [you'll take my advice,' continued Jack, placing his watch and chain under his pillow, and quietly unloosing his cravat, you'll quit this yer forlin', marry that chap, and hand 'over to him the money and the money-makin' that's killin' you. He'll get rid of it soon enough. I don't say this because *I* expect to git it, for when he's got that much of a raise, he'll make a break for 'Frisco, and lose it to some first-class sport *there*. I don't say neither that you mayn't be in luck enough to re-form him. I don't say neither—and it's a derned sight more likely—that you mayn't be luckier yet—and he'll up and die afore he gits rid of your money. But I do say you'll make him happy *now*—and ez reckon you're about ez badly stuck after that chap ez I ever saw any woman, you won't be hurtin' your own feelins either!'

The blood left Peg's face as she looked up. 'But that's *why* can't give him the money—and he won't marry me without it.'

Mr. Hamlin's hand dropped from the last button of his waistcoat. 'Can't—give—him—the—money?' he repeated slowly.

'No.'

'Why?'

'Because—because I *love* him.'

Mr. Hamlin rebuttoned his waistcoat, and sat down patiently on the bed. Peg arose, and awkwardly drew the portmanteau a little nearer to him.

'When Jim Byways left me this yer property,' she began looking cautiously around, 'he left it to me on *conditions*. No conditions ez waz in his *written* will—but conditions ez *spoken*. A promise I made him in this very room, Mr. Hamlin—this very room, and on that very bed you're sittin' on, in which I died.

Like most gamblers, Mr. Hamlin was superstitious. He rose hastily from the bed, and took a chair beside the window. T

wind shook it as if the discontented spirit of Mr. Byways were without, reinforcing his last injunction.

'I don't know if you remember him,' said Peg feverishly. 'He was a man ez hed suffered. All that he loved—wife, fammerly, friends—had gone back on him! He tried to make light of it afore folks; but with me, being a poor gal, he let himself out. I never told anybody this—I don't know why he told *me*—I don't know,' continued Peg, with a snuffle, 'why he wanted to make me unhappy too. But he made me promise that if he left me his fortune, I'd *never—never*, so help me God—never share it with any man or woman that I *loved*! I didn't think it would be hard to keep that promise then, Mr. Hamlin, for I was very poor, and hedn't a friend nor a living bein' that was kind to me but *him*.'

'But you've as good as broken your promise already,' said Hamlin; 'you've given Jack money—as I know.'

'Only what I made myself! Listen to me, Mr. Hamlin. When Jack proposed to me, I offered him about what I kalkilated I could earn myself. When he went away, and was sick and in trouble, I came here and took this hotel. I knew that by hard work I could make it pay. Don't laugh at me, please. I *did* work hard, and *did* make it pay—without takin' one cent of the fortin'. And all I made, workin' by night and day, I gave to him! I did, Mr. Hamlin. I ain't so hard to him as you think; though I might be kinder, I know.'

Mr. Hamlin rose, deliberately resumed his coat, watch, hat, and overcoat. When he was completely dressed again, he turned to Peg.

'Do you mean to say that you've been givin' all the money you made here to this A1 first-class cherubim?'

'Yes; but he didn't know where I got it. Oh, Mr. Hamlin, he didn't know that.'

'Do I understand you, that he's bin bucking agin Faro with the money that you raised on hash? And *you* makin' the hash?'

'But he didn't know that—he wouldn't hev took it if I'd told him.'

'No, he'd hev died fust!' said Mr. Hamlin gravely. 'Why, he's that sensitive—is Jack Folinsbee—that it nearly kills him to take money even of *me*. But where does this angel reside when he isn't fightin' the tiger, and is, so to speak, visible to the naked eye?'

'He—he—stops here,' said Peg, with an awkward blush.

'I see. Might I ask the number of his room—or should I be a—disturbing him in his meditations?' continued Jack Hamlin, with grave politeness.

'Oh, then you'll promise? And you'll talk to him, and make *him* promise?'

'Of course,' said Hamlin quietly.

'And you'll remember he's sick—very sick? His room's No. 44, at the end of the hall. Perhaps I'd better go with you?'

'I'll find it.'

'And you won't be too hard on him?'

'I'll be a father to him,' said Hamlin demurely, as he opened the door and stepped into the hall. But he hesitated a moment and then turned and gravely held out his hand. Peg took it timidly; he did not seem quite in earnest—and his black eyes vainly questioned, indicated nothing. But he shook her hand warmly, and the next moment was gone.

He found the room with no difficulty. A faint cough from within, and a querulous protest, answered his knock. Mr. Hamlin entered without further ceremony. A sickening smell of drugs, palpable flavour of stale dissipation, and the wasted figure of Jack Folinsbee, half dressed, extended upon the bed, greeted him. Mr. Hamlin was, for an instant, startled. There were hollow circles round the sick man's eyes, there was palsy in his trembling limbs, there was dissolution in his feverish breath.

'What's up?' he asked, huskily and nervously.

'I am, and I want *you* to get up too.'

'I can't, Jack. I'm regularly done up.' He reached his shaking hand towards a glass half-filled with suspicious, pungent-smelling liquid, but Mr. Hamlin stayed it.

'Do you want to get back that two thousand dollars you lost?'

'Yes.'

'Well, get up, and marry that woman down-stairs.'

Folinsbee laughed half hysterically, half sardonically.

'She won't give it to me.'

'No, but *I* will.'

'*You*?'

'Yes.'

Folinsbee, with an attempt at a reckless laugh, rose trembling and with difficulty to his swollen feet. Hamlin eyed him narrowly and then bade him lie down again. 'To-morrow will do,' he said 'and then——'

'If I don't——'

'If you don't,' responded Hamlin, 'why, I'll just wade in and *cut you out*!'

But on the morrow Mr. Hamlin was spared that possible act of disloyalty. For in the night the already hesitating spirit of Mr. Jack Folinsbee took flight on the wings of the south-east storm.

When or how it happened, nobody knew. Whether this last excitement and the near prospect of matrimony, or whether an overdose of anodyne had hastened his end, was never known. I only know that when they came to awaken him the next morning, the best that was left of him—a face still beautiful and boylike—looked up coldly at the tearful eyes of Peg Moffat. ‘It serves me right—it’s a judgment,’ she said in a low whisper to Jack Hamlin, ‘for God knew that I’d broken my word and willed all my property to him.’

She did not long survive him. Whether Mr. Hamlin ever clothed with action the suggestion indicated in his speech to the lamented Jack that night, is not of record. He was always her friend, and on her demise became her executor. But the bulk of her property was left to a distant relation of handsome Jack Folinsbee, and so passed out of the control of Red Dog for ever.

A Florentine Orphanage.

BY E. LYNN LINTON.

THE poetic idea of Italy is of a land blessed by a nature so generous that want and misery are necessarily unknown. The people are frugal, and the sun shines bright and warm from a cloudless sky for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year:—how then can there be want where a slice of bread and a bunch of grapes are a sumptuous meal? where a dish of polenta, to be had for a mere nothing, does the work of our costly beef and beer and makes a new creature of an exhausted man? where human life goes on by a perpetual series of small miracles—physiology having laws of its own not in force elsewhere, and meteorology following suit? Living under a cloudless sky and in perpetual summer, the people of course want neither fuel nor warm clothing; for cannot they sit in the sun and warm themselves free of trouble or expense, while we poor shivering wretches crouch over our coal fires and find that even then we do not get warm? Is not their December equal to our August? Who talks of the cold sharp winds that blow over the wide Campagna, over the fertile plain of Florence, icy as the snow-covered mountains whence they come—winds so sharp, so cold, so icy, that no warmth seems left in man or the sun?—who talks of rains so incessant and fierce that the great rivers overflow their banks, farms are laid under water, crops destroyed, and live stock starved to death, while the people themselves are reduced to the utmost misery?

Italy, poetised, idealised, is the land of perpetual summer, flowing with milk and honey, bright with beauty, gay with song; a land where men and women dance half the night and sing all the day, mainly occupied in laughing and making love while working at labour so light as to be pleasure rather than toil; a land where they chant the songs of Tasso in Venice, dance the tarantella in Naples, stand in picturesque groups about the Piazza di Spagna gravely mindful of their heroic ancestry in Rome, and steeped to the lips in art and the worship of the beautiful in Florence. How the work of large cities and wide lands is done; how the fields are watered, the rivers fed, the wells supplied; how the autumn leaves are shaken from the trees, and the trees themselves left to rest in the winter sleep of nature, no one asks himself:—Italy is the land of sunshine and poetry, and these home every-day matters do not deserve attention.

The reality is far removed from the ideal, and the silver medal has but a miserably poor reverse, all things considered. We find in fact as much misery as we have in cold and foggy England, as much poverty and personal suffering, and far less means to meet the demand, because of a weaker organisation everywhere. The Romish Church breaks down just where it might have been expected to have shown itself strongest; and though by its charities it has pauperised the nation, it has not relieved its needy nor solaced its suffering. There is an enormous amount of hand-to-hand almsgiving, but very little systematised relief. And especially is this true for those presumptuous and misguided poor who have placed themselves outside the pale of the papal communion. Unwise and evil minded, they are regarded as rebels to constituted authority, and to be left in their poverty as unworthy to be cared for by those who are solicitous for the real good of humanity and wish to see the triumph of truth over error. They have given themselves up to ungodliness here, and they are lost to all eternity hereafter:—according to the creed of the priests whose control they have repudiated. Wherefore they are left to their own devices, and the questionable protection of that Father of Lies whom they have chosen for their own. No hand is held out to the native dissenting poor—no help given to them—save such as comes from the rich *forestieri* who have at heart the establishment of mental freedom and religious liberty here in beautiful Italy as well as at home. This isolation—necessary and logical as it may be, and the price that must needs be paid for the higher gain involved—falls hard enough on those children of the Protestant poor who may chance to be left orphans. Discarded by the outraged Catholic friends of their parents, and by the Church which those parents abandoned, they have no prospect before them but beggary, crime, and the streets. They are emphatically shipwrecked in mid-ocean; and if it were not for the English and American residents in Florence, and just a very few of the Italian free-minded men themselves, they would be lost.

But with the occasion generally comes the means, and so with the orphan children of the Italian Protestant poor.

Salvatore Ferretti, a Florentine and educated for the Church, preferred Luther to the Pope and the Bible to the Mass-book, and became a Protestant layman instead of a popish priest. Before Italy had won her political freedom she had no religious liberty; and if Ferretti did not want to testify to the sincerity of his faith by a lifelong imprisonment, he must leave the country betimes. He did so, and took refuge in London. Here he established a small home for the orphans of the exiles of '48, beginning with

two little girls whom he took into his own family, precarious as his means of living were, and gradually raising his numbers up to fourteen—fourteen human beings whom he thus nobly rescued from the destruction and degradation of the London streets. In '63, when Florence was free and Italy was One, Ferretti returned, bringing his children with him, and founded the female orphanage which now bears the name of Collegio Ferretti—at 10 Via del Gignolo, fuori di Porta alla Croce. The indefatigable secretary is an American lady, Madame Bianciardi, 15 Piazza d'Azeglio, Florence; and to her all enquiries, &c. should be addressed.

Set in the midst of the vineyards and olive gardens of the Val d'Arno, about a quarter of an hour's drive from the town, this pleasant, simple, homely institution is well worth a visit—and something more. The house and grounds have been bought, and the property is vested in the hands of some American gentlemen as trustees. Before this was done, Signor Ferretti and his orphans were being perpetually 'moved on,' turned out here and driven away there by zealous landlords hounded on by the priests, who naturally enough disliked the doings of this heretical philanthropist who got hold of lost lambs, and brought them up in his own doctrines to the salvation of their souls and bodies, and the fractional loss to the Church. Now the place is a permanency and a property; and so far the institution has a backbone. It has been working for fifteen years; and in all this time there has been only one death among the children;—that of poor little Emma Spelta, who died of inherited consumption at ten years of age:—while more than a hundred girls have been educated and sheltered here, and sent out into the world able to get their own living by honest and honourable means. Many are teachers in schools; many are nursery governesses, maids, or other domestic servants, according as they have intellectual ability. One is teaching Kinder-garten school at Pozzuoli; another is doing the same thing at Intra; a third is teaching the Waldensian school at Porto Ferraio in Elba; a fourth is happy at San Francisco; a fifth is with a clergyman in Milan, a sixth with one in Rome; and so on. The higher education given to those who can profit by it enables them to pass the Government examinations and get diplomas for teaching; while the domestic training, which includes fine sewing and, formerly, good laundry work as specialities, teaches cleanliness and order all through.

The directress, who is Salvatore Ferretti's widow—and an Italian brought up in England—has about thirty-six pounds a year English money (a thousand paper lire), and each child costs

between thirteen and fourteen pounds a year. It is from want of funds that the expenses are higher than else they would be, and that the institution still labours under debt; and how this comes about, the following extract from the Report of 1878 will explain better than we can:—

‘The misfortune is, there being no fixed income. Fresh endeavours have been made by the local committee to bring the expenses of the institution down to the lowest possible figure, compatible with giving the children really good and wholesome food, and a solid and useful education. The taking in of washing was given up, as it was not found sufficiently profitable to compensate the labour of supervision, and the expense of skilled instruction; a saving in many ways, but still rather to be regretted on the score of the girls’ training for service. But with all that has been done, scarcely any perceptible reduction of expense has been found practicable, and 1877 has, we regret to say, closed, like its predecessors, with a considerable amount of debt—3,651 francs. The real truth is, that no reduction will be practicable until the managers of the institution are enabled to pay *ready money* for their provisions, &c. &c. Housekeeping in Italy is different from what it is at home, and much depends on being able to purchase at the right moment. For instance, were there sufficient money in hand before the autumn, wheat, wine, and oil could be procured at one-half the price asked for them at other seasons, and it has been calculated that a saving of nearly 40% might be effected annually on the article of *bread* alone.’

This is perfectly true, as all know who have had any experience of Italian housekeeping. It does not answer to run up tradespeople’s bills here. Ready-money payments alone keep a family afloat; and it is no matter of surprise to any one who knows this fact, that a large family like the Ferretti orphanage gets stranded when the housekeeping has to be conducted on the basis of tradesmen’s bills and no laying in of stores.

A drive out to the Collegio Ferretti on a fine afternoon is a pleasant experience. Set in the midst of the rich farms and gardens of the wide Florentine plain, it has the beauty of surroundings for which this fair City of Flowers is famous. From the upper windows we have all the points which we learn by heart here:—the blue hills of Fiesole; the more distant peaks of Vallambrosa, now white and dazzling with snow; the rich slopes of the home hills, such as those over which the Viale dei Colli has been driven; the town dominated by the great cupola of the Duomo, with the campanile standing like a sentinel by its side; Mr. Leader’s castle of Vincigliato; and the Casa Landor, where dear old Walter Savage

Landor once lived, and where his widow and daughter still abide—all that we delight in can be seen from the windows of the house where these poor helpless little orphan girls are cared for and instructed, and where their merry voices and pattering steps make music of the kind so dear to women and philanthropists.

The house is commodious, airy, healthy; the appointments are poor, but excellently neat and clean; the needlework is beautiful, and the little needle-mistress is one of those lovely souls which sometimes come from heaven to inhabit a frail and crippled body; the food is good and simple, and includes a meat meal once a day for five days in the week, and 'maigre' for the other two; and the children look well cared for, bright, and happy. Some have yet the pallor and pinched look of their poverty-stricken days, but others are robust, and a few are splendidly beautiful. One girl, of about twelve years of age, had the face of a tragic muse; another, a Neapolitan, dark and richly-coloured, might have been the direct descendant of a Greek faun; one little creature was a cherub or an amorino in a print pinafore and serviceable boots; and one tall, graceful, lily-looking girl, with American blood in her veins, stood out from the rest as a white rose among a bed of damask ones. Three of them acted a little play for our amusement, and spoke their parts with perfectly right gesture and intonation; natural and graceful, and in no wise affected, forced, or exaggerated. There was neither boldness nor consciousness about them, but they did what they had to do with that sweet graciousness; that pleasant want of shyness, which characterises the Italians at large, and which is one of their greatest charms.

How much good this orphanage does, how much misery it saves, a few instances will be sufficient to show. Take the little Lauretta. She was brought to Mrs. Marsh, the queenly wife of the American minister and who is the tutelary genius of the institution, as the only chance of rescue from starvation. The family was Protestant; and the elder brother, who had been the younger children's support and patron, had been ruined by an unfortunate contract made with a certain Prince —. They were all half-starved, having lived for four months on a plate of vegetable soup and an onion once a day; and the elder sister, showing her poor thin neck, bony, wasted, hideous in its youth from want and privation, said: 'Look at me, signora. I have not been feasting while my little sisters were starving.' Lauretta, though still comparatively pale and undersized, is daily developing into reasonable robustness; and by the time she leaves the Home, will probably be a strong young woman, capable of getting her own living honestly, instead of having before her only the sorrowful wages of vice, or a premature grave because of want and famine.

Another poor little creature, Emma Delfino, 'lost her parents some years ago, and the poor girl has since then wandered about in the streets, begging her bread, and sleeping in stables, exposed to all sorts of dangers.' 'She was entirely destitute' says he reports, 'and one day excited the compassion of the Protestant pastor at Basignano, Signor Girola, by following him, begging for bread, half clothed and starving. On inquiry, he found that she was of Protestant parentage, and wrote to the institution to ask if she could be received there. But the rules imposed by hard necessity would have made it impossible to take in even so urgent a case, had not the Rev. J. R. McDougall found kind friends to become responsible for her support, and the poor girl was sent to Florence at the expense of the small Protestant community of Basignano. The women prepared her simple outfit, the men contributed to pay the expenses of her journey, and even the children of the Sunday School clubbed together to present her with a small token of remembrance. The Roman Catholics of the place were all quite astonished at the interest excited by the case of this child, and, it is said, arrived at the conclusion that their Protestant neighbours were "very good people."'

There are other stories even more touching than these. Two little girls were left fatherless about a year ago, and the mother went out to service, for the wages of twenty francs a month. This sum she paid over to her husband's married sister for the support of the two children. A few days ago, another aunt chanced to come to Florence with her mistress, an English woman, and went to look after her dead brother's orphan children. 'She found them late at night, one a child of seven, the other nine, quite alone, and having had no food for many hours.' They could tell nothing of the woman who had charge of them, except that she had gone to the hospital. On further inquiry, it turned out that this woman, whom poverty had compelled to go to the hospital for her confinement, had died there that morning.' The husband had forgotten all about the children; their mother, out at service, knew nothing of what had happened; and if the aunt had not come in at the moment, the little creatures might have been left here, frightened, faint, and hungry, till help would have come too late.

There are histories on histories of the same kind of poverty and distress among these poor people, who find themselves at cross purposes with the current faith of their nation, and who, unless they are helped by their co-religionists of foreign blood, will not be helped at all. To the Church they are naturally anathema maranatha; and any sorrows which fall upon them, heretics as they

are, mean to the priests simply the divine punishment of a sin which even Grace cannot forgive. And as there is no national organised system of relief in Italy, as with us, these poor Protestant orphans might starve by the road-side before the Church would help them to live—unless at its set price of adoption into its own body. But Protestantism in Italy means freedom of thought, and the acceptance of personal moral responsibility; and the seed, small as it is, promises too well for the future, for us, who have won our liberties of the same kind, to wish to see it stifled. Believing, as we English do, that this freedom of religious thought, this acceptance of moral responsibility, is essential to the true greatness of a nation, and the advancement of a people—believing, too, as most of us do, in the good to be got by unchecked study of the Bible, and the ability to distinguish between the foundations of Christianity and the superstructure of Romanism—it can scarcely be a matter of indifference to us that in priest-ridden, ignorant, superstitious Italy there should be growing up a little band of the faithful which will do so much good if only it is kept alive!

And if the orthodox themselves are as poor as they are,¹ what must not the heterodox be—those who belong to what is as yet an obscure, unfashionable, and struggling sect, with but few people of condition among their own compatriots, and depending for help mainly on foreign co-religionists? We in England hold ourselves as the charitable nation *par excellence*. Also, we all make a great point of our Protestantism, and some of us are enthusiastic for Italy. On these three counts, then—of charity, religious zeal, and love for the most beautiful country in the world—this little female orphanage at Florence deserves some of those crumbs which we scatter so freely from our tables; for lives saved and female honour rescued from destruction are sacred things in every land, and our national cruse of oil is not yet exhausted.

¹ Professor Villari's fine book, 'Le Lettere Meridionali ed altri scritti sulla quistione sociale in Italia,' and a remarkable series of articles in 'La Rassegna Settimanale,' speak plainly enough of the intense misery under which the Italian peasantry and operatives groan. And yet we can scarcely say groan, for their patience, their forbearance, their marvellous faculty of long-suffering are beyond all praise, and almost beyond all example. It is always hope with them and patience, and looking onward to the good time coming, which does not come. Meanwhile such men as Professor Villari, Leopoldo Franchetti, and Sidney Sonnino give their strength to the ungrateful task of exposure, which must needs come before amelioration; but which, always bringing disfavour on those who undertake it, requires a truer kind of patriotism, and a higher quality of courage, than even fighting in the field for one's country and one's flag,

‘Admit Two to the Boxes.’

BY DUTTON COOK.

CHARLES DICKENS has related how he was once present at a social discussion, originated by chance, as to what was the most absorbing and longest-lived passion in the human breast? What, it was asked, was the passion so powerful that it would almost induce the generous to be mean, the careless to be cautious, the guileless to be deeply designing, and the dove to emulate the serpent? An answer, we are told, was furnished by a gentleman of vast experience and acuteness, an editor of a daily newspaper, who was one of the company, and who surprised all by stating with the utmost confidence that the passion in question was, ‘the passion for getting orders for the play.’

The earliest entertainments of the stage were in the nature of street exhibitions, and the spectators who desired to avoid paying for the pleasure thus afforded them had but to walk or look in an opposite direction when the hat came round for contributions towards the reward of the performers. Clearly, there was no occasion for ‘orders for the play’ in the days when Thespis travelled from town to town, erecting a temporary stage upon his cart, and providing the public with dramatic representations of a rude and imperfect sort. It was not until payment at the doors was demanded, and there were doors at which to demand payment, that the desire arose to obtain ‘orders’ or gratuitous admission by favour of the manager, his assistants and servants. Directly there was a question of paying, there appeared a public who did not want to pay, but desired to be entertained free of expense. Something like a ‘free list’ thus became inevitable; somehow the ‘passion for getting orders for the play’ had to be appeased and its demands complied with.

In Shakespearean times it is clear that a custom prevailed of admitting dramatic poets gratis into the theatre, not merely when their own plays were performed, but even when they had no personal interest in the representation. It must be remembered, however, that many of these poets were also players, and thus had a professional claim to free admission. Dekker, in his ‘Satiromastix,’ 1602, accuses Ben Jonson of sitting ‘in the gallery’ during the performance of his plays, distorting his countenance at every line ‘to make gentlemen have an eye on him, and to make the players afraid to act their parts.’ And a further charge is thus conveyed: ‘Beside you must forswear to venture on the stage when your play is ended and exchange courtesies and compliments

with the gallants in the lords' rooms (or boxes), to make all the house rise up in arms and cry "That's Horace! that's he! that's he! that's he that purges humours and diseases!" Jonson, indeed, has not hesitated to satirize his own demeanour in the theatre. 'We are not so officiously befriended by him,' says one of the characters in the Induction to 'Cynthia's Revels,' referring to the dramatist, 'as to have his presence in the tiring house to prompt us aloud, stamp at the bookholder (or prompter), swear at our properties, curse the poor tireman, rail the music out of tune, and sweat for every venial trespass we commit, as some author would.' While, in the Induction to his 'Staple of News,' Jonson has clearly portrayed himself 'rolling up and down like a tun' in the midst of the actors—'never did vessel or wort or wine work so . . . a stewed poet! . . . he doth sit like an unbraced drum with one of his heads beaten out,' &c.

In all Mr. Pepys's playgoing experience, there is no record of his entering the theatre armed with an order, although he relates with some glee how, upon a certain occasion, by going first to the Duke's and afterwards to the King's Theatre, he managed to see for nothing an act of 'The School of Compliments' at one house and an act of 'Henry IV.' at the other. In his time the spectators who left the theatre after the termination of the first act of the play were entitled to a return of the price paid for admission, and it appears that the performances did not begin precisely at the same hour at both houses. Further, Pepys relates Tom Killigrew's 'way of getting to see plays when he was a boy.' 'He would go to the Red Bull, and when the man cried to the boys, "Who will go and be a devil, and he shall see the play for nothing?" then would he go in and be a devil upon the stage, and so get to see the play.' We may assume that Killigrew knew nothing of orders, or had no friend behind the scenes to give him admission; otherwise he would scarcely have played the part of a 'super' for the sake of seeing the play.

During Garrick's management of Drury Lane, free admission to the theatre seems to have been accorded to all dramatists and men of letters of the time boasting any sort of acquaintance with him. Even upon Fitzpatrick, so severely ridiculed and castigated by Churchill in the *Rosciad*, the compliment of 'the freedom of the playhouse' had been conferred in right of his education having given him 'a taste for the belles lettres, more especially for dramatical writings,' and because of his frequent attendance at the theatre and at the coffee-houses about Covent Garden, particularly the Bedford. This did not restrain Fitzpatrick from figuring as the ringleader of the half-price riots of 1763, when both Drury

LANE and Covent Garden Theatres suffered seriously from the violence of the mob of malecontents. By way of retaliation Garrick wrote his 'Fibbleriad,' the hero of the poem, Fizzgigg, being readily identified with the absurd Fitzpatrick. Now and then the freedom of his playhouse was flung back to the manager in the most contemptuous fashion. Thus Foote, angry at the suspicion that he was to be caricatured upon the stage by Woodward as Malagene in Otway's 'Friendship in Fashion,' writes to Garrick: 'If your box-keeper for the future returns my name he will cheat you of a sum not very contemptible to you, viz., five shillings.' And thus Arthur Murphy, indignant and petulant because a farce of his composition had not been immediately accepted and produced at Drury Lane, returns his ticket of admission: 'As I do not foresee any further occasion for this obliging passport, I am not willing to trespass too long upon your civility.' Garrick replies with much dignity and good sense: 'You were most extremely welcome to the tickets, or any other assistance in my power, in all your undertakings, whether serious or whimsical. If you choose to relinquish your right to the freedom of Drury Lane playhouse, you certainly will do as you please. But, without the ticket, I imagine Mr. Murphy will find the doors open to him as usual; and be it further known to you, sir, that as I thought you were above an undue influence, I never meant the ticket as the least tie upon the liberty of your pen or conversation.'

This custom of according free admissions to persons distinguished in literature, art, and science, was followed by later managers, and notably by Macready, during his tenancy of Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres. He notes in his diary the receipt of 'many letters of acknowledgment for the freedom of the theatre,' and records how a mistake was made in addressing Faraday as a knight when forwarding him a ticket of admission for Covent Garden during the season of 1837-8. 'Received a note from Faraday, abjuring his claim to knighthood, thanking me for the card of admission, but returning it on account of the "Sir"; answered him, and sent him a corrected card.' At the same time, in his addresses to the public, Macready professed himself opposed alike to the general issue of orders and to 'exaggerated or fallacious announcements in the playbills.' When engaged, however, not as manager, but simply as a member of a company, Macready seems always to have stipulated for 'the privilege of writing an order for two each night of my performance.' Sometimes he further required that one of the private boxes should be placed at his service, 'when they were not let.' And, with other actors, he was inconvenienced occasionally by the ill-timed applications for

'orders' on the part of his friends and acquaintances. Thus he writes: 'Received a note from Sally Booth, requesting orders; but, seeing Bunn in the theatre, I could not permit myself to ask for any. Wrote a note to Sally Booth and to Pemberton, excusing myself from giving the orders requested.' Macready was at this time very indignant with his manager, Mr. Bunn, who was subjecting the tragedian to a course of mortification by way of bringing about the abrupt close of his engagement. Macready 'would not permit himself' to ask for orders because, as appears in his diary, Mr. Bunn had just declined to provide him with pantaloon suits to wear in a new play, 'The Provost of Bruges.' 'I was resolved to purchase none,' he writes; 'was very angry, and therefore very blamable.' (Presumably, he wore an old pair upon the occasion.) Very soon the actor's fiery temper betrayed him into the violent conduct he afterwards lamented so unceasingly. His assault upon his manager led to the action of Bunn v. Macready in the Sheriff's Court, when the damages were assessed at 150*l*.

Writing from his experience as a manager, Mr. Bunn describes 'the free admissions commonly called *orders*' as 'the very bane of the profession,' while admitting the absolute necessity for their liberal issue. The performers always stipulated for them, not could they be granted to a few of the leading players only, except at the risk of souring the rest of the company; and the press long claimed them as a matter of custom and privilege, and 'on the score of reciprocity;' for in the days of the advertisement duty it was usual for the newspapers to insert theatrical announcements simply upon payment of the duty, and without other charge. Thus it seems that in 1745 the advertisements of Drury Lane were inserted in the 'General Advertiser' at a charge of three and sixpence per night or advertisement, the exact amount of the duty. But the relations existing between the stage and the press are of ancient date, and worth more particular examination.

It is clear that originally there was no question of the managers paying the newspaper-proprietors for the insertion of theatrical announcements. These were viewed as items of news; there was a struggle for priority in obtaining them, and persons bringing them to the publishing office were duly paid for their services, and were counted among the valued contributors to the journals in question. Extracts from the ledger of Henry Woodfall, the publisher of the 'Public Advertiser,' quoted in Andrews's 'History of

¹ The advertisement duty was first imposed under Harley's administration in 1712. It was originally charged according to the number of lines, but afterwards became a fixed duty of 3*s*. 6*d*. per advertisement, reduced in 1833 to 1*s*. 6*d*. The tax was wholly abolished in 1853.

British Journalism,' demonstrate that in the last century the theatres were a considerable expense to the newspapers. Amongst the items of payments are: 'Playhouses, 100*l.*; Drury Lane advertisements, 64*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.*; Covent Garden ditto, 66*l.* 11*s.* 3*d.*' It appears that the papers paid 200*l.* a year to each theatre for the accounts of new plays, and were in the habit of rewarding with a shilling or half-a-crown the messenger who brought the first copy of a play-bill. Shopkeepers also paid at this time for the privilege of exhibiting play-bills in their windows or upon their counters. In 1721 the following announcement appeared in the 'Daily Post':—'The managers of Drury Lane think it proper to give notice that advertisements of their plays by their authority are published only in this paper and "The Daily Courant," and that the publishers of all other papers who presume to insert advertisements of the same plays can do it only by some surreptitious intelligence or hearsay, which frequently leads them to commit gross errors, as mentioning one play for another, falsely representing the parts, &c., to the misinformation of the town and the great detriment of the said theatre.' 'The Public Advertiser' of January 1, 1765, put forth this notice: 'To prevent any mistake in future in advertising the plays and entertainments of Drury Lane Theatre, the managers think it proper to declare that the play-bills are inserted by their direction in this paper only.' The manager of Covent Garden Theatre also published a like notice.

In the eighteenth century news was a scarce and valuable commodity, and some difficulty existed in finding matter sufficient to fill the columns of the journals, their diminutive size notwithstanding. Little foreign intelligence was obtainable; there were no correspondents on the Continent, no leading articles, and the publication of parliamentary debates was prohibited. The press was subject to rigorous laws; editors, publishers, and journalists were liable upon slight provocation to the severest punishments; they worked, as it were, under the immediate shadow of the pillory. The stage had thus the advantage of being a safe subject; while the transactions of the theatre were generally interesting, both on their own account and because of the absence or the forcible suppression of other topics. Fear sat heavily upon the journals of a hundred years ago: it was necessary to allude to the Prime Minister as the P—e M—r; the Secretary of the Treasury figured in print as the S—y of the T—y; while the bankrupts of the time were enumerated in a list delicately headed B—pts. There must have been something of comfort in the frank mention of Mr. Garrick's name and in open reference to *proceedings at Drury Lane and Covent Garden*. As late as 1752

the editor of the 'Leicester Journal'—printed in London, for printing-presses were rare in the provinces in those days—found news so difficult to obtain, that he was induced to fill his columns with a reprint of the Bible in weekly portions! And certainly, the art and the economy of advertising were little understood in the last century. Not merely were the managers paid for their announcements, but during the general election of 1774 some of the papers declined printing the separate addresses of the candidates, lest injustice should be done to their readers by undue encroachment upon the space usually devoted to news. Charges for publication, a revenue arising from advertisements, enlargements, supplements and double supplements, were things that as yet stood not within the prospect of belief—were, indeed, altogether undreamt of.

As the press increased in importance, it ceased to pay the managers for dramatic news: it obtained a sufficiency of other intelligence; and now its good opinion became of value to the theatres, and its insertion of theatrical announcements gratuitously, or upon payment of the duty merely, was held to entitle it to 'reciprocity,' as Mr. Bunn calls it. The proprietors or the editors of newspapers were privileged to write orders admitting two to the boxes nightly. With the increase of newspapers came the increase of orders, until there seemed quite an army of persons claiming free admission to the theatre. The inconvenience of this became especially evident when an attractive exhibition was offered, and when there was no lack of visitors willing to pay for their entertainment; for though it was usual to suspend the ordinary 'free list' upon such occasions, it was understood that exception must always be made in favour of 'the public press.' In 1852 Mr. Albert Smith, occupying the large room at the Egyptian Hall with his popular entertainment of 'Mont Blanc,' forcibly expressed managerial discontent on the subject. He wrote:—'It is perfectly impossible to give any further accommodation to the shower of newspaper admissions that flow into my room every evening. The hall holds about 430 persons; of these there are seats for 90 in the stalls, 160 in the area, and 180 in the gallery. Were the whole of the newspapers claiming a right to admission to send in their orders early in the evening, they would monopolise every seat!' Mr. Webster, then tenant of the Haymarket and Adelphi theatres, in support of Mr. Albert Smith's protest, published a statistical account of the number of free admissions issued by the London newspapers in the years 1850, 1851, and 1852, and presented at the doors of the establishments under his direction. It will be sufficient to state in round num-

bers the results of Mr. Webster's calculations. During the three years mentioned, the newspapers, some fifty in number, had obtained the admission of upwards of 70,000 persons to the Theatres Royal Haymarket and Adelphi. The value in money of these orders, according to the usual tariff of admission, was over 16,000*l.* Mr. Charles Mathews, then manager of the Lyceum, also joined in the discussion, alleging that his theatre had suffered to the extent of 25*l.* per night, or at the rate of 7,500*l.* a year, from the admission of 'press orders.' Further, a claim was urged on the part of the theatres for more liberal treatment, for a new measure of 'reciprocity,' at the hands of the press. It was charged that notwithstanding the generosity of the managers in regard to the admission of 'press orders,' sundry dramatic critics, the representatives of particular newspapers, had ventured to write unfavourably of the performances they had undertaken to review. Orders were thought to be not merely 'press privileges,' but also the prices paid to the newspapers for 'favourable notices'! Mr. Mathews wrote letters to the papers, and even published statements of rather extravagant character in his play-bills, especially singling out for attack the dramatic critic of the 'Morning Chronicle,' Mr. Angus B. Reach, a writer of great wit and humour, possessed of a bright and incisive style, who had criticised with some severity the entertainments presented at the Lyceum Theatre. The discussion, which raged for some time, and to which many contributed, was subsequently recorded in a volume entitled 'Press Orders,' edited and published by Mr. Albert Smith. And as a result of this 'paper' war, many of the newspapers resigned their privilege of issuing orders for the theatres, and were content to receive tickets admitting their representatives to reserved seats whenever any performances were presented that seemed deserving of critical attention.

It has assuredly been unfortunate for dramatic criticism that relations of a kind likely to be misunderstood have subsisted between the theatres and the press. Mr. Charles Mathews has not been the only manager of opinion that a critic in the enjoyment of press privileges should judge with exceeding tenderness, and even with some inclination to puff, the entertainments of the stage. Mr. Macready enters in his diary: 'Wrote to the editor of the 'Weekly Dispatch,' striking that paper off the free list.' There was no doubt special provocation in this instance. Macready had been attacked with considerable rancour, and eventually had to seek redress by means of an action at law for libel. But newspapers that ventured upon any severity of criticism were now liable to be struck off the free list by way of punishment for

offending the manager. At one time Macready seems to have suffered at the hands of the 'Athenæum' critic. He records: 'The Messrs. Dilke called and went over the affair of the "Athenæum" criticism, speaking with great candour and good nature, endeavouring to palliate the false statement of "The Bridal's" "want of attraction," and coming to a very amicable, agreeable arrangement, as settled yesterday, respecting the interchange of orders for advertisements.' In the course of his career as manager, Mr. Bunn suspended the free admission of Mr. J. Payne Collier, the dramatic critic of the 'Morning Chronicle,' charging him with writing a 'tissue of falsehood and nonsense' concerning certain of Mr. Bunn's theatrical productions. Mr. Collier explained that, owing to his absence from ill health, the review in question had been written by a deputy, and that he was wholly unaware of the difference that had arisen between the manager and the newspaper. 'Had I known it,' he writes rather meekly, 'I should not have run the risk of the admission I have hitherto used, and which I gave to a friend, being rejected.' In later times the managers have often sought to gain 'the whip hand' of the newspapers, less by threats in regard to striking them from the free list, than by intimations that all advertisements would be withdrawn if reviews of a favourable character were not systematically provided. Advertisements are of course much prized by the press. They are not only a great source of profit; they are evidence of large circulation and prosperity, and they are convenient to the public. A journal that is less supplied than its contemporaries with advertisements seems placed at a disadvantage in their regard. 'Never offend an advertiser,' has become a maxim, a ruling principle, with many proprietors of newspapers. It has sometimes happened, therefore, that in deference to the complaints and the menaces of the advertising manager, the newspaper-proprietor has exhorted his critic to leniency and partiality of judgment, and bidden him praise what should rather be dispraised. But of course there are many newspaper-proprietors not to be moved by managerial interference, valuing independence above advertisements; as there are many critics who would not subject their reviews to unfair influence, or indeed any dictation, on the part of newspaper-proprietors.

The newspapers freely availed themselves of their privilege of issuing orders as a means of wooing the advertisers. And here we are brought back to the opinion that the most absorbing, unappeasable and longest-lived passion in the human breast, is the passion for getting orders for the play. The advertiser likes to be *stimulated*, or complimented, or rewarded, by the receipt of free admissions to the theatre. In an amusing paper upon 'Bill

Sticking,' originally published in 'Household Words,' Mr. Charles Dickens describes the bill-sticker as securing positions for his placards by his liberal distribution of orders for theatres and public exhibitions. 'If there were a building,' the chief of the bill-sticking craft is supposed to say, 'or if there were repairs going on anywhere, you could generally stand something and make it right with the foreman of the works; but "orders," would be expected from you, and the man who could give the most orders was the man who would come off best. There was this other objectionable point in "orders" that workmen sold them for drink, and often sold them to persons who were likewise troubled with the weakness of thirst; which led to the presentation of your "orders" at theatre doors by individuals who were "too shakery" to derive intellectual profit from the entertainments, and who brought a scandal on you.' The passion for orders has been further exemplified by Mr. Dickens's story of the sailor picked up at sea—one of the very few survivors of a terrible shipwreck. Rescued, he made his way to London—to a newspaper office—and told his dreadful story to the editor. He had seen his ship go down before his eyes. He had witnessed the most terrible contention between the powers of fire and water, which should first destroy his ship and everyone on board. He and a few of his mates had rowed away among the floating dying and the sinking dead. He had floated by day and he had frozen by night, with no shelter and no food, and as he told his dismal tale he rolled his haggard eyes about the room. 'When he had finished,' related Mr. Dickens, 'and the tale had been noted down from his lips, he was cheered and refreshed and soothed, and asked if anything could be done for him. Even within him that master passion was so strong that he immediately replied he should like an order for the play. The editor thought that was rather a strong case.'

It is not only from press orders, however, that trouble and debate have arisen. In 1747 Benjamin Victor, one of the managers of the Theatre Royal, Dublin, wrote to David Garrick, 'one of the patentees of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane':—'We shall be obliged to you if in your next letter you will inform us who are the persons belonging to the royal family that claim the liberty of your theatre—I mean, if any, and who—every play night? We all know there are an appointed number when the king or any of the royal family goes to the house. The reason of this inquiry is to form some application to the Lord Lieutenant to redress the insupportable grievances this theatre labours under; you know it is an old custom here for Government to pay 100*l.* a year for the Governor and his court, and as the Theatre Royal is

now under new management, a list has been made out (I suppose at the secretary's office) of ninety-two persons who claim a free seat in the theatre every night, if they please to demand it.' Free admissions to royalty are not now perhaps the occasion of much difficulty to managers, but as much may not be said in relation to other orders. Just as there are countries possessed of paper armies only, so there are theatres that seem greatly dependent upon paper audiences. In the eyes of the manager, an empty house is the most distressing of spectacles; rather than that, he would seek spectators in the highways and byways and compel them to come in. The audience admitted gratuitously is in the nature of a decoy; it may lure a paying public into the theatre. The appearance of the house is an evidence of success, and the success of an entertainment—even its supposititious or rumoured success—is a sure means of attraction. It has been estimated that some 30,000 orders are distributed weekly by the London managers, and that if one half of the number now entering theatres gratis were required to pay for the privilege, the theatres would collectively profit to the amount of over 150,000*l.* per annum. 'To sow orders broadcast,' writes one well informed on the subject, 'has now become one of the most important of theatrical functions; and an "acting" manager, who has a list of persons to whom he may send orders with a certainty of their being distributed, ranks higher than the best of actors.' A manager whose origin had been humble, and who had scarcely moved among the socially distinguished, once described an acquaintance as his greatest benefactor, adding the explanation: 'He gives away my private boxes to respectable people!' At the same time it is indisputable that orders are bestowed upon many both able and willing, under a different system, to pay for their seats. The gift of an order is attended with a certain demoralising effect; the recipient is thenceforward disinclined to pay for his admission, and finds an unworthy pride in his privileged state, flattering himself that he is much better off than his neighbours: he obtains for nothing what they would be required to pay considerably for. It is alleged, however, that a certain Nemesis waits upon the play-goer provided with an order. His sense of enjoyment is vitiated and numbed. The play is less pleasant seen for nothing than when properly paid for—the result of some effort to secure a place and even of some sacrifice of personal comfort. And 'orders' have the reputation of being a bad, an unsympathetic audience. They are said to be critical, cynical, hard to please. They undervalue the entertainment set before them: naturally—it has cost them nothing, and perhaps they have arrived at the theatre under conditions *ruffling to the temper*. The orders may have reached them at

the last moment, disturbing their other arrangements, including those relative to dinner and digestion. The gentleman may have had no time to make due changes in his dress; the lady may have hurriedly assumed a crumpled red opera cloak to hide the incompleteness or the unpicturesqueness of her toilet. It is not so surprising that they should survey moodily, with saturnine eyes, the transactions of the stage.

But this broadcast sowing of orders is not a system originating to-day. Mr. Bunn, in his book entitled ‘The Stage both before and behind the Curtain,’ published an ‘account of certain orders issued under Charles Kemble’s management of Covent Garden Theatre by his treasurer, Mr. Robertson, between May 17 and July 12, 1824.’ It appears that during this brief period, upwards of 11,000 orders were written, to the value of nearly 4,000*l.*, or an average of 100*l.* per night; these orders, of course, being in addition to the free admissions issued by the press. Mr. Charles Kemble was appearing as Romeo, Benedick, Faulconbridge, Falstaff, Young Minrel, to houses crowded in this artificial way. It is no such wonder that, a few years later, the management became involved in great disaster, all the property in the theatre being seized and advertised for sale by the parochial authorities because of the non-payment of the rates. Mr. Bunn expressed his opinion that ‘the indiscriminate distribution of orders was the most deceptive pivot upon which the fortunes of a theatre could possibly turn,’ and further, ‘one of the most thankless, troublesome, and injurious of the many duties devolving on the manager of a theatre.’ He doubted the general opinion that a given quantity of orders always brought along with it a given amount of money, holding that it never brought the amount it kept away; and referring to the ingratitude of the recipients of orders, he relates how he once gave free admissions to his solicitor, who in the course of the evening, between the play and the farce, came behind the scenes for a few minutes’ conversation, and then returned to his family in the boxes. ‘When his bill of costs was some time after sent in, one of the items ran thus: “To attending you in your room at the theatre, 6*s.* 8*d.*”—the very night he and his family had entered free!’

Only a few years since, the late Mr. Charles Mathews, writing, however, as an actor, and no longer in the capacity of manager, returned to the subject of orders, complaining of the numberless applications he received for orders “for any night most convenient to himself”—as if any night was ever convenient! He proceeded: ‘It is no exaggeration to say that, were all the requests addressed to the manager and the various members of a theatre complied with on the same night, the public would be altogether excluded from the upper portion of the house. . . . No one writes for an

order to the Royal Academy! No one asks for an order from a shopkeeper for a toothbrush or a bottle of ink, for which other people have to pay a shilling! Why, then, should a place in the theatre, costing four shillings to the public, be supplied gratis to any one who chooses to ask for it? No doubt there would be an abundance of applications for orders for the Royal Academy, or for toothbrushes or bottles of ink, if it were known that such privileges were anyhow obtainable. People ask for orders because they know that it is in the power of some to distribute them, and that they are occasionally to be obtained with little difficulty.

It is clear that by Charles Lamb orders were much cherished. Leigh Hunt, writing of his youth, when he was supplying 'The News' with reviews of the theatres, declared 'that to know an actor personally appeared to him a vice not to be thought of; and,' he added, 'I would as lief have taken poison as accepted a ticket from the theatres.' He was endeavouring to introduce independence in theatrical criticism as 'a great novelty.' Until then (1807) 'puffing and plenty of tickets' had been the prevailing system. 'It was an interchange of amenities over the dinner-table; a flattery of power on the one side, and puns on the other; and what the public took for a criticism on a play was a draft upon the box-office, or reminiscences of last Thursday's salmon and lobster sauce.' But Lamb, though he often wrote about the stage and was a frequent playgoer, was never formally attached to a newspaper as its recognised critic; he had no misgivings lest his fairness should be impeached or any suspicion arise concerning his distribution of praise or censure. In his early days there had been pit orders. He writes: 'Beshrew the uncomfortable manager who abolished them!' The pit, in the consideration of the critical, was preferable to the boxes; from the lowlier station the actors could be seen and heard so very much better. Elia was supplied with orders, as he professed, by his godfather, who kept an oil-shop in Holborn. He was the associate of John Palmer the comedian, whose gait and bearing he seemed to copy; he was also known to and visited by Sheridan. 'From either of these connexions it may be inferred that my godfather could command an order for the then Drury Lane at pleasure; and, indeed, a pretty liberal issue of those cheap billets, in Brinsley's easy autograph, I have heard him say, was the sole remuneration which he had received for many years' nightly illumination of the orchestra and various avenues of that theatre—and he was content it should be so. The honour of Sheridan's familiarity—or supposed familiarity—was better to my godfather than money.'







Displaying a practical knowledge of what she was talking about which obtained immediate obedience.

Queen of the Meadow.

BY CHARLES GIBBON.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE MEADOW.

A BRIGHT June day; warm and sleepy: overhead a pale blue sky, with three fleecy islets far apart, moving drowsily along; the atmosphere laden with the perfume of new-mown hay. The hedgerows were glistening with wild flowers. The river, winding its slow way through fields of ripening grain, flashed with prismatic colours that almost dazzled the eyes, darkened as it passed under the willows and beech trees, but reflecting their outlines sharply in its depths, and flashed again with mirth as it kissed the long grass at the foot of the meadow.

In the meadow, half-a-dozen children were romping among the hay, and their happy voices mingled delightfully with the blithe notes of the birds. Women, in dull grey skirts and white sun-bonnets, were raking the hay into heaps, and men were pitch-forking it on to a waggon. The horses stood sleepily waiting the sound of the whip to drag the burden to the farmyard; the leader occasionally nibbled the grass at his feet, but it was with the lazy air of an epicure and without appetite. A black mass of crows passed like a cloud, and with querulous clamour settled on two huge oak trees which stood in the centre of the meadow.

One woman stood, with hands clasped behind her, surveying the labourers, at times directing them with a firm voice, and always displaying a practical knowledge of what she was talking about, which obtained immediate obedience to her commands.

Polly Holt not only knew what ought to be done, but she could do it herself; and the men said she was worth any six women they had ever seen when she chose to put her hands to the work. She had built the trimmest stack in the county; her cattle were in better condition than any to be found within a day's ride; her butter fetched the highest price in the London market; in good and bad seasons her crops were always of fair average quality: and all this was no doubt in great part due to the fact that she looked after everything herself.

She wore a broad-brimmed straw hat, which might have suited a man, only the black ribbon which surrounded it was ornamented

with a little bunch of wild-flowers. Under the shadow of the hat was a fresh young face, bright blue eyes, and a small resolute mouth which no man would have dared to kiss without authority. Her hair was auburn, soft as silk and as glossy; her complexion was of that pure transparent character which generally accompanies such hair. The pattern of her gown was perfectly plain, and the material was little finer in quality than that of her workpeople's dresses; but if she had been dressed in sackcloth the grace of her tall lithe figure would have made the sackcloth look charming. Her every movement was as vigorous as that of a strong man, and yet beautiful.

She gave her commands in a quick business-like way, and they were obeyed without question; but when they were neglected, she could scold with so much effect that even women were rather shy of encountering her wrath. Perhaps the effect of her scolding was due to its rarity; at any rate, she contrived to manage the business of the farm, which had been bequeathed to her by her father, with very little assistance from her guardian, Job Hazell, who occupied the neighbouring farm of Marshstead.

She was proud of her place, happy in all that she had to do, and entirely unconscious that there was any special misfortune in her position, although several youths of the county had endeavoured to convince her that she would be much more comfortable if she had a husband to look after her affairs. She laughed at the idea and at the youths, thereby preventing many others from offering her the service they would have been glad to give. 'A saucy wench,' one of the rejected had called her; but the others still admired her independence, extolled her ability, loved her beauty, and sighed that such a prize was beyond their reach and yet to be won by some lucky fellow. Some of them even wished that she would find a master for the Meadow farm, and so put them definitely out of agony, for so long as she remained unwed, ever the rejected might be pardoned for fancying that she might change her mind in favour of one of them.

Up from the river towards the haymakers marched a man who had nothing to do with the work of the day. He was dressed in brown tweed, a brown felt hat and fishing boots; he carried a fishing-rod in his hand, a basket—light enough, as appeared from its motion at every step he took—was slung at his back, and an ugly bulldog was trotting at his heels.

Tom Walton was a handsome young fellow, with a light heart which found expression in his frank, merry face. He had two passions—racehorses and dogs; he had many fancies, and the last fancy was pursued with as much ardour as if there were nothing

else in life worth attending to. Fishing was supposed to be his last hobby, and it was therefore unlike him that he should stray from the river.

Polly did not observe him until he was close to the waggon ; then she nodded ; he lifted his hat, and advanced briskly.

‘I could not pass when I saw you here,’ he said, laughing ; ‘and besides I have been out since eight o’clock, had no luck, and I am hungry.’

‘Good reason why you should come to us at dinner-time,’ she said in a matter-of-fact tone, but making him welcome at the same time. ‘I am just going up to the house, and you had better come with me.’

‘Thank you ; but don’t hurry—I like to be here with you.’

‘I thought you were hungry.’

‘Not when I am beside you.’

‘I am sorry to spoil your appetite.’

‘I wish that was the worst harm you had done me,’ he said, smiling and resting on his fishing-rod whilst he looked into her eyes ; ‘but you have spoiled my rest too, and spoiled my sport. The fish have come to understand somehow whereabouts you are, and they desert the parts of the stream nearest to you ; so I go wandering about with an empty basket. But I am content, when I can get a gossip with you.’

‘It’s five minutes to twelve, and Sarah will be waiting dinner,’ observed Miss Holt callously ; and, after a few words to one of the men, she turned towards the house.

Walton shouldered his rod, and marched beside her. He was not in the least abashed by the indifference with which she treated his pretty speeches ; he was used to it. He made love to her in the most open manner, and she allowed him to run on his course, with no more idea of stopping him than she had of checking the current of the river. Sometimes she was amused by his ‘nonsense,’ as she called it, and at other times she proceeded with her own affairs as if she did not hear him.

As the two walked away from the workers, the women paused and nodded towards them.

‘They’ll make a pretty couple,’ said one ; ‘she’s a strapping wench, that’ll hold her own with him.’

‘Ay, and the lad’s not unhandsome,’ said another.

‘We may look out for a master, come Christmas, Nance,’ said One of the men.

‘And it’s a good match,’ rejoined Nance, a woman of fifty, with a brown, weather-beaten face, who had been born on the Meadow farm, and who had never been farther away from it than to the

county town once. 'Master Walton's a bit wild, but she'll tame him, if woman can. To my thinking, she wants a man that's a bit wild to give her somewhat ado. She'd never be content with a steady-going lad like Michael Hazell, though they do say that old Job is bent on the match between they two.'

'Well, more nor Job have counted their chickens afore they were hatched, and counted 'em wrong too.'

At which profound observation the men and women laughed. Then they sat down under the shade of the two oaks, and ate their bread and cheese.

Polly and her companion made two pretty figures in the grey-green landscape; the heat caused them to walk leisurely, at his earnest request, for she was disposed to hurry. The cows, reclining lazily chewing their cud or standing stolidly with their backs to the sun, stared sleepily at them as they passed. When they came to the trees on which the crows had settled, the birds rose with a loud noise and flew in a black cloud over the meadow towards the Earl's Park. By that time they were within view of the farm-house, which stood on the rise, at the top of the meadow. It was a simple, old-fashioned house, with quaint little windows in the upper story; the red tiles and the white walls covered with rose-bushes, heavy with buds and flowers, stood out pleasantly from the background of green trees, and the black-looking barn, which was close by, added to the effect of the scene.

'I wonder if you will ever get married,' said Walton, looking at the old house, and really enjoying its picturesque appearance.

'Very likely I will some day. Most women expect to be married, which is the clearest proof of their weakness.'

'And you own to the weakness?'

'Why not? You wouldn't believe me, if I said anything else.'

Tom was thoughtful for a moment: an occurrence sufficiently rare to make her glance sideways at him curiously.

'That's true enough,' he said, still looking at the house; 'and the fact of your owning it so freely makes me doubt whether you really mean it or not. How will you reconcile yourself to leave the old place?'

'I have not thought about that, and I do not like the notion of it; but I suppose the man who can make me give up my life to him will easily reconcile me to giving up the house. Only I would rather not leave the place.'

'Then the man ought to give in to your wish, and be content to settle down at the Meadow for ever. I would be glad to have the chance of doing so—with you.'

But as you cannot have the chance, what is to become of you?’

‘I don’t know. Maybe I will enlist, or go to America ; but then I would not like to distress you by doing anything so desperate.’

‘Oh, pray don’t consider me in the matter.’

‘Very well, I won’t. And yet——’

He stopped, balanced the fishing-rod on his finger, made it perform a circle round his hand ; then laughed and peered at her under the shadow of his broad-brimmed hat, a merry twinkle in his eyes.

‘And yet, I was going to say, you somehow make me think of you, although I know that you don’t care a button for me, and that whether I come or go is of no consequence to you.’

‘I am always pleased to see you.’

‘Yes—as you are pleased to see anybody else.’

‘What more could you expect?’

The question was so direct, and the surprise was so thorough, that for an instant he felt rather foolish.

‘I have no right to expect anything else ; and I ought to be—and I am grateful for the consideration you give me. But it’s my conviction that to win a woman a man should never be downright in love with her.’

‘You speak from experience.’

‘Maybe. But you have taught me that as soon as a fellow really loses his heart, the lady plays the tyrant and makes a fool of him.’

‘Don’t you think it is possible that he may have been a fool to begin with?’

‘Not a doubt of it ; any man who falls in love is a fool. See how you lead me—up hill and down dale——’

‘Through the garden and in to dinner.’

She had her hand upon the swinging stile ; he placed his upon it.

‘Will you be serious for a minute?’

‘For two, if you like.’

‘Then, answer—are you engaged to Michael Hazell?’

She made a curtsy of mock respect.

“I’m engaged to nobody, sir,” she said ; and not likely to be, according to my present ideas.’

‘I was told——’

She interrupted him with a very indignant glance of her bright eyes.

'I have answered you more directly than you deserved, for your question was——'

'An impertinent one. I beg your pardon. But you will own that it was better to appear rude to you than to remain in doubt as to the truth of the rumour.'

She gave such a pretty toss of her head.

'I do not see what difference the truth or falsehood of the report can make to you.'

'It makes all the difference in the world; for so long as you are free, I can still hope.'

'It is without reason then.'

'I refuse to believe that until I see you married to somebody else—which you will not be—or until you forbid me to see you again.'

'I forbid you now.'

'What, whilst Bones and I are starving? You can't do that. Look up, Bones, and tell her she can't do that.'

Bones shook his stump of a tail, gave a short growl, and looked up: but the black patch which surrounded his right eye and which had obtained for him his Christy Minstrels' name rendered his heavy jowl and white teeth all the more disreputable and savage-like. He, however, took the responsibility of action upon himself by leaping through the bars of the gate and marching up to the house to the accompaniment of the loud barking of a Newfoundland, who was chained beside a large shed.

Walton opened the wicket, and Polly, laughing at his audacity, passed through. They had entered the orchard: the apple and pear trees were heavy with the promise of fruit, and afforded a pleasant shade from the sun. In one corner was a pond, where ducks and geese were enjoying themselves; the grass was long and green, pleasant to the feet and refreshing to the eye after the stretch of grey hot meadow they had traversed.

At the porch they found a little white-faced dark-eyed lad caressing Bones. The dog submitted with apparent satisfaction, but he kept one eye fixed upon the corner of the house round which was the kitchen door, and as soon as he was permitted he trotted off in that direction.

'Mr. Walton is to dine with us, Sarah,' said Polly, passing into the house, and taking off her hat in the hall.

As she shook hands with the gentleman, Sarah Hodson's expression of pleasure curiously mingled with eager inquiry. She examined his face as if seeking something, and not finding it, her eyes turned away impatiently. She was dissatisfied, and gave

very short answer to his frank greetings and inquiries for her health.

But he was accustomed to her odd humours, and heeded them very little; he paid small attention at any time to matters outside his immediate interest, and at this moment all the mind he had was concentrated on Polly Holt. He occasionally felt puzzled by Sarah's manner, and it was for no want of self-esteem that he failed to attribute it to her attachment to himself. He had quite forgotten the violent flirtation which he had carried on with her immediately after their first meeting; he had not committed himself by any absolute declaration; and if his attentions had been marked, why he had paid the same attention to a dozen others, and had passed away from them to the new fancy without the least idea that he was hurting anybody or that there was anything to blame in his conduct.

He had quite forgotten, too, that his first visit to the Meadow farm was paid to Miss Hodsoll to condole with her on the death of her father. All his subsequent visits were made to see Polly Holt, although he had not scrupled to pretend at the beginning that he came to see Miss Hodsoll. He would have been astounded and indignant if he had been told that he was not acting fairly to the girl. He had never thought of anything serious in his attentions to her, and he saw no reason why she should give them a serious interpretation.

But Sarah was a strange creature: as a child, she had been always shy and retiring; often moody, she had few companions and no friends, except Polly Holt. At the age of ten Polly had lost both parents. Sarah, who was then fifteen and a woman in her ways, was interested in the child and looked after her with maternal care, sympathising deeply with her, because she herself had been left motherless years before, and had often yearned for the dear presence which was only a shadow in her memory. So when Sarah's father died, leaving her only a small annuity, Polly asked her to come and live at the farm and take charge of the house.

'We are two lone girls,' said Polly; 'but we can get on very well together. You have been your father's housekeeper for ever so many years, so you can manage the house-work, which I don't like, and I can manage the affairs out of doors, which I do like. Do you know, Sarah, it's a fancy of mine that there was some mistake at my birth—I ought to have been a boy?'

Mr. Hodsoll, the brother of Polly's mother, had been the attorney of Dunthorpe. He was supposed to have made a good round sum by his business and speculations; but his mania for horses had swallowed up the greater part of his gains and had

brought him into contact with Tom Walton—or, rather, had made Tom Walton an intimate friend and frequent visitor at his house. Sarah was at the head of the house; and as Walton could not be in the presence of a woman without trying to be agreeable, he tried to be agreeable to her. She was at first shy, and in a manner timid; then somewhat sour, and presently very much pleased. She had held herself so much aloof from the social gatherings of the young folk of the village that she understood very little of the principles of flirtation, and had no idea at all of how much may be said in the excitement of the moment, meaning nothing.

She had heard many faults attributed to Walton: she could see none. More than once her father had been angry with him; she defended him. Various not very pleasant stories were told of his conduct in London, and she refused to believe them. In truth, there was nothing worse in his character than a very hearty relish of pleasure in every form, and a very stupid or selfish blindness to what others might suffer so long as he was merry.

CHAPTER II.

BUSINESS BEFORE PLEASURE.

THE dinner at noon Walton accepted as an early lunch, and, blessed with a good appetite, he satisfied his hostess that he enjoyed her fare—a round of corned beef, vegetables gathered that morning, a suet pudding, followed by bread and cheese and such butter as only Polly Holt's maidens could produce. He drank the home-brewed ale with as much relish as he had ever experienced in drinking the finest claret.

He talked of London and its wonders, and its wickedness—illustrated by anecdotes gathered chiefly from the 'fashionable' periodicals—to the amazement as well as amusement of Polly. He was unconscious of the reserve in Sarah's manner, a reserve which gradually disappeared as he chattered on and appeared to give as much attention to her as to her cousin. When he spoke directly to her, the pale face brightened, and a laugh trembled on her lips when he referred to some of the pleasant days he had spent with her father. They were in the height of enjoyment, when Polly, who was seated with her face to the window, suddenly observed in a practical tone, as if returning from the land of nonsense to that of business:

'There's Michael! he has come about the cow. He thinks he

can cure her, but I'm afraid we will lose her. Better ask him to come in, Sarah.'

Walton's mental exclamation was anything but a pretty one. He looked sharply at Polly to discover what amount of sentiment there might be in her pleasure at the arrival of young Hazell; but he could discover nothing. She called him by his Christian name, though, and that was something; she would not call him Tom. He entirely overlooked the fact that Polly and Michael had grown up together as intimately as brother and sister.

Sarah noted his glance, and the displeasure it indicated; all her reserve returned. She left the room quietly.

'Michael always turns up just when he is wanted,' said Polly, rising; 'I had half made up my mind to have that cow killed this afternoon, and now he'll be able to settle the matter.'

'I suppose he settles a good many matters for you,' said Walton, with as little bitterness as he could manage to display.

'Why, he settles everything for me since Uncle Job gave over the management of affairs,' exclaimed she, with a look of wonder that he did not know it before.

'And I suppose he'll settle down with you some of these days,' was the irritable exclamation of Walton, as he too rose to his feet.

'I might do worse,' she answered, laughing; but instantly the laugh was checked and her face became crimson, for Michael Hazell entered the room.

A tall, broad-shouldered fellow, with brown curly hair, ruddy clean-shaven face, and merry blue eyes. He was dressed in a short blue coat, tight grey breeches, and brown gaiters. He had his whip in one hand and his billycock hat in the other.

'How are you, Polly?' he said in a somewhat loud but not unmusical voice, and shaking her hand with a frankness which showed that he was quite unconscious of the favour her last remark might have implied.

Walton felt that he hated the man for his familiarity and for his vigorous health, but he exchanged greetings with an appearance of cordiality, mixed with some condescension, which was entirely thrown away on Michael, for he neither saw it nor felt it. A rapid interchange of commonplaces about weather and the hay-crop: then Polly, coming to business:

'We had better go round and see the cow, Michael; she seems worse, and I don't think we should keep her.'

'I'll tell you when I see her.'

'Will you come with us, Mr. Walton?'

How *confoundedly* formal the 'Mister' sounded in Walton's

ears: he had never known before how much distance could be concentrated in the simple prefix to his name.

'I'll follow you,' he said gallantly, but thinking unpleasant things about the cow and about Michael Hazell.

They went out to the cow-house, passing through a crowd of cackling geese, quacking ducks, fluttering cocks and hens, and bellicose turkeys. The cow-house with the barn and other buildings formed three sides of a square, a gate and walls the fourth side, enclosing the court, in which bullocks were feeding on straw, and pigs were wallowing in the mire, every now and then tossing up odorous clumps of manure with their snouts.

In the cow-house there was only the invalid, the other cows being out at grass. She was lying on her side: Michael poked her in the ribs, uttered a number of growls as Walton thought, and presently the animal rose shakily to her feet.

'She'll do,' said Michael, after he had critically examined her. 'Where's the bottle?—she'll come all right after another dose.'

Polly, instead of telling him where to find the bottle, took it down from a rack herself and went up to the head of the cow with it. Michael seized the animal by the nostrils, pressed its head upwards, and poured the contents of the bottle down its throat.

'That'll do,' he said; 'it's the last dose, and she'll be out at grass in a week.'

Polly doubted, and there was much discussion of the case between them. Then he wanted to see the court; and after he had felt the backs of the bullocks and studied the pigs, there was still more discussion about the rate of improvement in the condition of the animals.

In the midst of all this conversation and action, Walton followed dumbly, afraid to hazard the least remark lest his ignorance should be made manifest, and pretending to look on with the amused air of a spectator who was far above such vulgar things as the health of a cow or the fattening of bullocks and swine. At the same time, he would have given a good deal if he had been acquainted with the rudiments of cattle-feeding, so that he might have joined in occasionally with some sage remark.

As it was, he had never in all his life felt himself so ignorant, and never was so irritated with himself for being so. If they had talked of horses, then he could have taught them something, the latest tip for the Derby, the 'good thing' for the Oaks, &c.; but this vulgar business of cattle and pigs, how could a gentleman be expected to know anything about it?

Notwithstanding the vulgarity, he felt uncomfortable and small

in his utter ignorance. He was not cruel, but he heartily wished that cow to die, in order to prove Michael wrong.

'You don't care much about cattle, Mr. Walton,' said Polly, suddenly becoming aware that her guest had been forgotten in the interest of her own affairs, and by way of apology giving him the unkindest cut of all; 'you see, Michael does; and I was anxious about that cow, for she cost me thirty-six pounds only six months ago.'

Walton felt ready to offer her the thirty-six pounds for the brute, so that he might have the pleasure of poisoning it.

'Oh, but I have been greatly interested and instructed by the conversation between you. Don't mind me, just go on; you know that everything new amuses me.'

'We're done now; but I want Michael to look at an offer I have had for the hay. Will you go in with us?'

Walton mentally used imprecations on Michael, cows, hay, bullocks, pigs, and all concerned: he only stopped short at Polly herself.

But he said, respectfully enough:

'I'll just go in and get my rod and basket. I think I'll try the stream again, although the sky is too clear for me to do much.'

Polly was unconscious of the irritation the man was feeling, and she 'hoped he would have better luck than in the morning,' with a sublime innocence that added to his pangs. Michael Hazell talked business whenever Polly turned to him, and rudely forgot Walton's presence.

Walton took his rod and basket, said Good-bye very hastily, and marched off, without asking for Sarah, who was watching him from the window above the porch.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE AND ARITHMETIC.

THE old-fashioned window of the Meadow farm parlour looked out on the green, which was enclosed by a thick privet hedge, with apple trees along the sides of the paths, and clumps of holly here and there. The gable was covered by rose-trees, and the roses made a screen across the upper part of the window, tapping the glass whenever a breath of wind stirred them, and filling the room with perfume.

Michael was standing at the window, reading a letter. Polly was seated before a desk, arranging various accounts and summing up her books.

'No,' said Hazell decisively, after he had read the letter, 'you must tell Braithwaite that he can't have the hay at that price. The man's a fool; he must have known that you would ask me, or at any rate my father, before closing the bargain, and he offers you less than you can get in the market.'

'But then he takes the whole thing off my hands, with the risk of falling prices; and you know hay is plentiful this year, while cattle are not.'

'But it is a bad season in the north, and that will make a difference to us. Braithwaite knows what he is about.'

'What shall I say, then?'

'Say, no.'

'Very well.'

She took a sheet of note-paper, and declined to accept the offer for the hay made by Braithwaite, who was the corn-chandler in Dunthorpe, and reputed to be one of the wealthiest and most unconscientious of men in the whole county.

Whilst she was writing, Michael stood carelessly watching the movements of the branches of the rose-tree against the window, gazing vacantly out on the green, and then quickly towards her with an expression that was so much made up of admiration and fear, that it would have been impossible to say which sentiment predominated.

'There, that's done. Now, here is Patchett's letter, in reply to my application about the roof of the barn. You know it is tumbling to pieces, and he says that I may repair it myself if I like, but that Sir Montague Lewis can do nothing. What am I to do now?'

Michael, in taking the letter, touched her hand; it was a mere touch, but, combined with what he had been thinking about as he watched the roses tapping against the window, it sent a thrill up his arm like an electric shock.

'You had better leave me to settle with Patchett about the roof,' he said, with a droll utterance as if he had been running fast and was a little out of breath.

'Oh, but it is bothering you too much; I can easily tell him whatever you advise. My own notion is, to say that, until he puts the roof right, he gets no more rent.'

She was sitting, pen in hand, her eyes running over the account, and she did not see the jerk his head gave when he heard, 'bothering you too much.' There was a shadow on his face as he turned again to the roses, and the green, and the apple-trees. The words kept running through his head, and he repeated them to himself as one repeats a riddle while seeking the answer.

What did she mean by talking of 'bothering' him? Had he

not run her messages, brought her parcels from the town, settled disputes with the labourers, and helped her with all his might in managing the farm since she was a girl of thirteen and he a youth of eighteen? And the idea of 'bother' had never occurred to him till now, when she suggested it. She never thought of it before, either, he was sure of that. Why did she think of it now?

His lips closed tightly, and the shadow deepened on his face when he found the answer to the riddle in the remembrance of Walton.

'What are you thinking about, Michael?' she asked, with the pen between her teeth, as she rubbed the blotting paper on the figures she had just written, and turned to a new page.

He reached his hand out at the window and plucked a half-open rose-bud. He twirled it between his fingers as if he were spinning a teetotum, and did not answer.

'Five and four are nine—(well, are you afraid of Patchett?)—and five are fourteen,' she said, interpolating the question between her calculations.

'No.'

'What then?'

He bit the stem of the rose-bud and began twirling it again.

'I was wondering, Polly, why you talk about "bother" to me?'

'How much do seventeen and nine make?'

'Twenty-six.'

'Twenty-six—because, Michael, I know that you have had a great deal of bother about my affairs, and I have been thinking that it was a shame to be always calling on you to do what I ought to do myself, or give up the farm.'

He took another bite of the stem of the rosebud.

'When did you begin to think that way?'

'It has been growing in my mind for some time—I can't tell you when it began; but when I think of all that you have done for me, and all the trouble you have taken about me in your good-nature—'

'Damn the good-nature!' he cried irritably, flinging the rosebud from him: it fell on the table amongst the accounts. Then, recovering himself, he added penitently: 'I beg your pardon, Polly, but you do worry me.'

'Forty-six and five are fifty-one—I didn't mean to do so, Michael.'

'I wish I could think so. If you don't, why do you turn now and talk about trouble, when you know how glad it makes me to be near you, and to be helping you, and to feel that you are pleased with my help? But as soon as you look on it as a trouble, then

there is no more pleasure in it; for I know you don't care about me, and that you would like me to keep a little more out of the way.'

'That's not true—and seven are fifty-eight—I'll get muddled with these figures, if you talk so.'

'I know it is true, and I can tell you when you first began to think me troublesome.'

'I didn't say that.'

'It is since Walton has been coming about the Meadow,' he continued, without heeding her interruption.

She wrote in the total of the column she had been summing up, placed the blotting paper over the wet ink, put the pen down, and then resting her arms on the desk and clasping her hands, she looked at Michael with her clear, honest eyes.

'I believe you are right,' she said, as if he had given her some interesting information; 'he has made me think about a heap of things. He's a smart chap, and I like him.'

Michael stood a minute quite still; then he took up his hat and riding-whip from the little side-table on which he had placed them, and, in a softened voice:—

'Very well, Polly. You can write to Patchett, as you proposed—I think you have the right end of the stick; but if he makes any more objections, you had better see dad. Good-bye.'

'You are not going yet, Michael? you are not going away whilst you are angry with me?' she said, rising and advancing a step towards him.

'Not angry now—I own I was a bit angry at first, but now—'

He stopped as if he did not like to complete the sentence; but her clear eyes opened with quick inquiry, and there was something of sharp command in her tone.

'Well, now?'

'Now, I am only sorry.'

'For what?'

'For myself.'

That was not what he meant to say, and she knew it. It was part of the truth, however, and she knew that too, but she would not force his confidence. So, they said 'Good-bye;' he promised to be over in the morning to see the cow, and they parted as if nothing particular had happened.

In the hall he met Sarah.

'You are going soon, Michael.'

'Yes, I have something to do in the village, and I want to get home early.'

She laid her hand on his arm, stopping him as he was about to pass.

‘What is the matter?—you are not speaking like yourself, you are not looking like yourself.’

‘I don’t feel like myself to-day, Sarah; I’m queer, and out of sorts. But it’s nothing to make a bother about. I’ll be all right in a day or two. Good-bye, good-bye.’

And he hastily made his way out, took his mare out of the stable, and rode off without once looking behind.

Sarah did not go to her cousin immediately. She went into the kitchen, gave some mechanical instructions to the girl who was busy washing up the dinner-plates; then into the dairy, and surveyed the basins of cream without any apparent object; and, lastly, she went out by the back door, and, shading her eyes with her hand, gazed over the meadow and down towards the river, where Walton was fishing.

All the time she was thinking of Michael Hazell’s strange manner. There had been a quarrel with Polly. Why?

If Michael had told her his way of it, he would have said that Polly had given him his dismissal, and did not want him to interfere in her affairs in future; that she had owned outright that Walton was the man of her choice; and so, Michael had nothing more to say. This was a matter in which she had the best right to decide for herself. He could give her no advice, for, judging by his own feelings, it was an affair in which common sense played no part. She had decided, and he would do the best he could to forward her wishes and her interests; only——!

He had ridden quietly enough until he entered the gates of the Earl’s Park. There was a magnificent drive of three miles from one highway to the other, the House standing about midway. The Park was studded with huge oaks, of great girth and age, broad-spreading elms, and beeches which flashed in the sunlight like silver. Under the shade of the trees were herds of deer, for which the Earl preserved so many hundreds of acres of valuable land in grass. There were many who grumbled at this hobby, as an unjust exercise of the rights of the owner of the soil; but the Earl paid no heed; he was kindly, stuck to his hobby, and, as a matter of convenience to the county, gave free passage through the Park to all light vehicles, pedestrians, and horsemen.

So, Michael Hazell entered the Park, and then he started at such a furious gallop that the frightened deer scattered in all directions, some for a minute flying madly in the same direction as the horseman, then turning suddenly off and disappearing down the hollow, at the bottom of which ran a clear stream, crossed by many shadows of beeches and willows.

During that short quick ride he worked out the—‘only!’ He

had hoped—more, he had expected—that she was to be his wife and she knew it. She had accepted his service—how faithful and earnest it had been, she could tell; and now, with a breath, she blew to the winds the whole arrangements and the most precious prospects of his life.

And for what? Tom Walton was, no doubt, a fine fellow; he was a capital judge of horseflesh; he knew all about racing and London life; he was good-natured when he was not crossed, and he was the heir of Walton Abbey. Walton Abbey was a good-sized farm, the freehold of which had been in the hands of the Waltons for many generations. But Walton knew nothing of farming, and the place was so encumbered that, when the old people died, his position would be a very poor one. Besides, there were brothers and sisters to provide for, and Tom's share would be thus still further reduced.

Polly knew all that, and yet she could for the sake of a man in such a position disregard all old associations, and turn away from Michael Hazell, who, although only the son of a tenant farmer, was a wealthy man. Tom Walton, too, was not the man to make a woman happy; there were some sad stories linked with his name; but the fascinations of the reckless ne'er-do-well seemed to have conquered Polly, as they conquer most women, through some perversity of the feeling of pity.

Therefore, Michael had said, 'I am sorry for myself'—which was quite true—what he meant to say was, 'I am sorry for you.' And therefore he said now, 'So be it; I will help her all I can.'

If Sarah had asked her cousin what was her way of it, Polly would have told her that Michael was very queer in his conduct, that he had been angry with her for saying she liked Tom Walton, which was a fact, and she couldn't tell a lie and say she didn't. Michael would have been as angry with her if he discovered the lie as he was about the truth. Of course she knew that he misunderstood what she meant by saying that she liked Walton, but he would give her no opportunity to explain; and after all she saw no reason why she should be compelled to explain her likings or dislikings to Michael Hazell.

He had no right to control her, and she would not submit to be controlled by any man, unless he were her husband—and not him, unless he were reasonable. Maybe she had thought sometimes that Michael would hold that relationship towards her; but he had no business to assume it. He had no business to give out that they were engaged, as he must have done, or Walton would never have dared to put the impertinent question to her. She

as her own mistress, and she was indignant that even Michael could claim authority over her.

It was not fair of him, and she had a good mind to go to her guardian, Job Hazell, and tell him how badly his son had behaved. As if she cared for him ! And now she came to think of Tom Walton was a smart-looking fellow, and always kind and considerate. There was no denying that he was a fool about farming ; but everybody owned that he knew what a horse ought to be, and that counted for something in these days when horses were at high prices.

There were no more accounts made up that day. She gathered up the papers, methodically still, however, and put them in her desk. In doing so, she found the rosebud which Michael had thrown down in his passion. She had seen him playing with it, and now she was going to throw it out at the window ; but she checked the movement of her hand, and hurriedly flung the rosebud into the desk amongst her business papers, closing the lid quickly as if ashamed of what she had done.

‘What have you been saying to Michael ?’ said Sarah, who had entered the room very quietly. ‘Have you been quarrelling ?’

‘He’s an ass,’ answered Polly emphatically, as she put her desk away, ‘and Mr. Walton is a fine fellow.’

‘Oh——’ exclaimed Sarah quietly, but with many variations on the prolonged note.

She was puzzled at first as to the real meaning of her cousin ; and then, as she understood, a light leapt into her eyes, and she could have hugged her with joy ; but her placid nature did not give vent to the enthusiasm.

‘You are thinking of Michael, although you are angry with him.’

‘No,’ said Polly firmly, ‘I am thinking of Tom Walton, and wish he had not gone away so soon.’

The light darkened in Sarah’s eyes : it was difficult to understand Polly, sometimes.

CHAPTER IV.

DUNTHORPE.

It was a slow, still life the people lived in Dunthorpe and the country round about ; and they enjoyed it. Whose cow had calved ? whose mare had foaled ? who got the first prize at the last agricultural show ? who got the biggest price for fat cattle ? who was buried to-day, and who was to be married to-morrow ?—formed the

staple of conversation—the weather and the prospect of the crops forming, of course, always the leading topic. There were domestic subjects, too, which turned up at intervals to enliven the ordinary gossip with a spice of scandal. When any of the farmers' wives or the tradespeople's wives drove to Bishop's Stortford and took train to London, there was talk provided for at least a week: why did she go? What was she going for? What was she doing in the City? And wasn't she going too often? These questions were always received with wise noddings of the head, knowing looks, and probably an interchange of winks indicating that there could be no good in the excursions of the persons referred to. But it was all done in such a slow way, that even scandal lost its sting.

The place and people seemed to be always drowsy. The lawyer received a daily paper, which he passed on to the doctor. The parson received the *Times* at half-price, the day after publication, and he passed it on to the curate. The shopkeepers were always lounging at their doors, and the only men who seemed to have business to attend to were the brewer and the innkeeper; but even they were able to take life calmly, and never ran the risk of disturbing digestion by untimely bustle. For the mass, there was apparently nothing particular to do, but to move about in an easy way—as if they had only to sow at leisure and reap at pleasure. The parson preached in a slow monotonous way, as if he were half asleep whilst reading his own sermon. The people listened drowsily, and the shafts of mote-speckled light streamed in through the stained windows with an air of heavy indifference, as if they would not have been there if they could have helped it.

The cloudless blue sky, the drowsy hum of the bees, and the warmth of the sun, all conspired to make an atmosphere in which the weary City man would have felt himself at rest. The simple ways of the simple people would have filled him with joy and wonder: there was such a delightful sense of repose in all they did and in all their surroundings. The green undulating landscape, over which the heavy foliage of the trees cast broad shadows, suggestive of cool retreats from the heat of the day—the perfume of the hedge-rows, the song of the clear river as it crawled through the plain, flashing many hues in the eyes under the sunlight—were all full of repose, and the only noise which disturbed it was the musical chorus of birds, or the caw, caw, of the clouds of crows moving slowly from one rich field to another.

Every Johnny had his Joan, and the wildest excitement of their lives was when at the Fair he gave her a bag of nuts or a packet of sweetmeats, and in the evening treated her to a dance in

the big room of the 'Grey Goose,' the second-rate inn of the place. The 'Queen's Head' was more select, and its customers were the squires of the district and the chief farmers, although they had a tap-room in which the lads and lasses might sit and drink beer; but no undue hilarity was allowed. Still, the inn of a Saturday night was rather noisy in taproom and parlour.

The labourers in the taproom had their discussions about the fate of the nation, and occasionally grew angry with one another, so that they became eager to settle the whole matter by a personal combat in the yard; an arrangement which was always interdicted by the landlord, but sometimes came off in the street or in the nearest meadow.

The farmers and aristocratic tradesmen in the parlour became noisy over the prices of grain, and the betting on the favourite for the next horse-race. It was a sporting and hunting county, full of traditions of famous sportsmen and famous horses. Sir Montague Lewis had bought at an enormous price the winner of a Derby, and his stables at Elizabeth House were besieged by admiring crowds for a year or more. The Earl always had a fine stud of horses in his stables, and the farmers had a passion for trotting matches. The games in which the boys of the Grammar School delighted most were 'hare and hounds' and foot-races. The bigger boys understood the meaning of 'the long odds' and 'hedging.'

The village—or town, as the people called it—consisted of the main street, about half a mile in length, in which were the leading shops, all the doctors, the two lawyers, and the apothecaries. The appearance of the street was interesting. Whitewashed and red-tiled little houses stood side by side with newly erected buildings covered with slate and possessed of bow-windows. Newly decorated shops flourished in all the glory of fresh paint, beside the dingy-looking premises of some old-established dealer who felt his custom too safe to be tempted into rivalry of gaudy colours. Out of the street branched many lanes, alleys, and side streets which had a curious way of winding about and bringing a stranger back to the point from which he started.

But it was a cosy kind of place, and the houses nestled together in a neighbourly way; and despite many petty jealousies and not a little scandal, the people were kindly towards each other, and whenever there was illness in a house there was ready and practical help given to the afflicted family.

At one end of the main street, and only separated by a field, was the railway station; at the other end, the common. Facing the common, and the last building in the street, was the 'Queen's

Head.' At the opposite side of the common, standing in the midst of a group of small cottages, with patches of garden in front was the Grey Goose Inn. When the host of the Queen's Head met the master of the Grey Goose, he patronised him and wished him success. The Grey Goose thought the Queen's Head an upstart, but they were very good friends for all that, only their wives were 'not on speaking terms.' That was the mild way of saying they couldn't abide each other, and the children of the one family were strictly forbidden to have anything to say to the children of the other.

But Sunday came; the men and women put on their best attire, and marched with calm propriety to church. The old church, with its grey, massive tower, stood at the end of the common, near the ford, solid and venerable, the solemn guardian of the morals of the people. Its bell tolled with a deep tone and calmly, as if conscious of its rights of precedence, and undisturbed by the sharp tinkling of the chapel bells in the lower parts of the town. There was a serene atmosphere, and a sense of peace and sunshine everywhere.

Michael Hazell came clattering out of the Earl's Park and passed the common, where an honest donkey was drowsily engaged in munching the thistles, and looked up in solemn wonder at a fellow-creature being ridden so hard. Passing the Grey Goose, the smith, who was sitting on the bench in front of the house, with a pewter of foaming ale on the table beside him, and his pipe in his mouth, suddenly hallooed to Hazell to stop.

The suddenness of the shout caused him to pull up; but without turning he called out:

'I can't stop now, Darton.'

'There's a shoe loose, and you'll lame the mare,' shouted the smith back; and in a lower tone, 'and a screw loose too, it seems to me.'

Hazell was as careful of every animal under his charge as he would be of a human being. He instantly dismounted, and found that the smith was right.

'I'll take her round to the smithy; but get the shoe put right as quick as you can, for I'm in a hurry.'

'She'll be ready in half an hour,' said the smith, leisurely proceeding to drink his ale and smoke his pipe.

The smith's shop, a low-roofed building with red tiles and whitewashed walls, was only a few yards farther along the road. Michael led the mare through a labyrinth of old wheels, infirm ploughs and carts, into the shed, and gave her in charge of the lad,

who, as he approached, thrust into a tub of water a bar of hot iron which hissed and spluttered angrily.

Walking rapidly into the village, his head bent, as if much more than the welfare of the nation weighed upon his shoulders, he ran a-tilt against a man, who was turning the corner of the lane which led up from the river.

'Hallo!—oh, it's you, Hazell. You're in a deuce of a hurry.'

'I beg your pardon : I *am* in a hurry. Good-day.'

'Stop a minute, man ; you have nearly knocked the breath out of me, and you have hurt my foot most confoundedly.'

'I am sorry—it was an accident—I can say no more.'

'You can do something, though. Give me your arm across the road to the inn.'

Without a word Michael complied ; and Walton, with his aid, limped along, explaining his misfortune by the way with that kind of cynical disbelief in everything except 'luck,' which is the lazy man's refuge, and which was to Michael so utterly incomprehensible.

'I'm an unlucky beggar, but one must take it just as it comes. I had bad luck at the Meadow, I had bad luck in the river, and just when things seemed to be changing for the better—when I had hooked as pretty a trout as you ever saw, I had to leap a ditch that one might hop over, but it cost me a sprained ankle. I didn't think it was much until you trampled on my foot ; but, by Jove, I feel it now.'

'I'll send the doctor up to you,' muttered Hazell, vexed as well as sorry that he should have anything to do with the mishap, unable to break away from Walton, and irritated at being compelled to remain with him. So he suggested going for the doctor.

'Come in, and have a glass with me ; the ostler or boots will run for the great healer of broken limbs and broken hearts—I mean, disordered stomachs. Come along.'

'Thank you, I must go.'

They were standing in the private passage which led from the arched entrance to the stable court into the parlour. There was only a dim light in the passage, and Walton peered into his companion's face.

'At least complete your work, and get me inside.'

Michael flung open the door impatiently, and almost lifted Walton into a chair ; then turned to go.

'Come, Hazell,' said Walton in a low voice, with something of sincerity in the tone, 'you have won the day. We need not

quarrel. Lots of fellows have courted the same lass, and the winner and the loser have been friends afterwards. At any rate it is the loser who should have the privilege of grumbling. You are the winner, and I say, all right.'

'I don't understand your jokes.'

'Faith, there's not much of a joke in it—on your account she sent me about my business.'

'And on your account she sent me about mine.'

'What!'

The two men looked at each other with an expression of blank bewilderment. Michael, who was at first angry with Walton for trying to make fun of him, could not discredit the honesty of Walton's surprise, and he became calm, feeling that there was something to be cleared up here.

Walton, knowing the man pretty well, *thought* he would not tell a lie, although it was a theory of his that every man will lie when occasion requires it. So, at first, there was the feeling of surprise, followed by one of gratification and new hope. He had resigned himself, as he fancied, to the idea that Polly Holt was to marry Hazell, and now he learned from the man himself that she was to do nothing of the kind. Why, she must have been simply coquetting with him in order to make the more of her surrender.

He laughed outright, at the absurd position of affairs, and at himself for taking a woman at her word—there were endless proverbs to prove that the man who did so was a fool.

'Well, women are the drollest compound of sweetness and devilment, of kindness and cruelty, of good sense and folly—aye, and of virtue and vice, of all created animals. Why, what an ass I was to think she meant anything more than to annoy me! She——'

Michael's hand was on his shoulder, grasping it so that he winced.

'You had better stop there, Walton, if you mean what you are saying to apply to her' (he could not bring himself to pronounce Polly's name in this man's presence). 'She has a right to please herself in choosing a partner, and whoever he may be, no man shall speak with disrespect of her in my presence.'

Michael was quite cool now, and this was another surprise for Walton; his love and his hate were of a shallow order: he could not understand why people should keep up a quarrel; neither could he understand why a man who had just been dismissed by the girl he had set his mind on marrying should care two straws what was said about her.

'All right, Hazell, you needn't be afraid of me saying anything disrespectful of Polly Holt, for—well, I'll see about it when this confounded sprain is got rid of. But mind, it was you yourself who told me that she said no.'

'And you told me that she had said no to you.'

'That means we are both at liberty to follow or halt as we please. I cry follow, and by Jove, my blood's getting warm in the chase and—oh, the devil!'

The latter exclamation was one of pain, and had nothing to do with his rhapsody. In his excitement he had lifted his sprained limb from the chair with a sudden jerk, which produced a pang sufficient to remind him of his accident.

'I forgot you wanted a doctor,' said Michael quietly; 'good-day.'

He went out, and as soon as he got into the open air he drew a long breath, took off his hat, and wiped his brow. He could not make out the position. There was to him, as to Walton, a certain amount of relief in what he had just been told—only, he could not bear to think of Polly as a coquette!

His ideal Polly was an honest, straightforward woman, with much good sense, great energy, and extensive knowledge of practical farming—and all this combined with a sympathetic and faithful heart which would find its highest joy in making home a blissful retreat from all the weariness and worry of the world. How he had dreamed and hoped!

There was something thick in his throat as he thought of this now, and he gasped, 'Oh, Polly!'

The Polly represented to him by Walton was a weak, vain woman, who did not care how much pain she caused, so long as she gratified her own foolish desire of conquest: a selfish, worldly woman, and yet a fool.

He ran away from that horrible presentment; and, although feverishly eager to discharge his business in the village and get away from it, he did not forget to send the doctor to the Queen's Head.

Walton ordered in brandy and soda. Then, waiting for the doctor, he leaned back in his chair and whistled to himself the air of the song:

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen,
Here's to the widow of fifty;
Here's to the flaunting, extravagant quean,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.

He had quite forgotten the misfortunes of the day.

CHAPTER V.

A GAME AT DRAUGHTS.

POLLY's humour during the whole of that afternoon perplexed everybody about the farm. At one minute she was speaking with a tongue sharp as a razor, at the next she was laughing and joking.

She attended to business, however, with even unusual energy, as if she wished to satisfy herself that she could do quite well without the guidance or advice of anybody. The hay that was dry, she saw carted into the barn-yard, and was particular about the shape of the stacks; the hay that had been lately mown, she saw properly tossed and spread. She attended to the sick cow herself, but she spoke with contempt of Michael Hazell's doctoring, and wished she had called in the Vet (Veterinary Surgeon) at once. But Michael's instructions were carried out with remarkable fidelity.

In the evening she gave a blithe good-night to those of the haymakers who passed her. Then she stood at the top of the meadow, watching the men and women trudging cheerfully homeward, with their cans and odd bundles in their hands: some of the wives carried bundles of sticks which they had prudentially picked up by the way; the lads and the lasses, as they went along, were chaffing each other, making trysts, or quarrelling and threatening never to speak to each other again.

She wished that she had been one of them. She took off her hat, feeling the atmosphere too close for pleasant breathing, and swung it to and fro on her finger. The glow of a broad red sunset fell on her face and tried to brighten its shadows, fell on her hair and made it shine like gold.

She shaded her eyes with both hands for a minute, and tried to look far beyond the horizon; then, as the sun's reflections gradually deepened in tone from fierce red to orange, purple, and afterward to a warm blue with only streaks of fire, she turned and walked slowly towards the house.

The evenings at the Meadow farm were very quiet as a rule. Polly saw that all was right outside; that horses and cattle had been properly cared for, and that the doors of the stables, the barn and the hen-house were locked, and the keys delivered at the house. Sarah saw that the dairy had been cleaned up, that the cans were ready for the morning's milk, and that the dishes, plates, and kitchen generally had been all made trim.

Then the two sat in the parlour; a large paraffin lamp on the table, with a big green shade over the globe, so that the upper part of the room was in darkness, and so ghostly on dark and stormy

nights, that Polly would rise and lift the shade off. Sarah sat sewing or knitting at one side of the table, and Polly, at the other, generally tried to read aloud to her companion from some magazine or book. The evening closed by both of them yawning a great deal about nine o'clock, and going to bed before ten.

Things went on very much as usual on this evening, till the two girls sat down in the parlour.

Sarah took her seam in hand, and Polly her book. Polly opened the book, leaned back in the big old-fashioned chair which had been her father's, and his father's before him, and was in shape similar to that of a hall porter. She looked at the page, and then looked up to Sarah.

'This is a stupid book. I just glanced at the end, and the lovers all die off, and I don't like to be made miserable by a story. We have bothers enough of our own every-day.'

Sarah's thread had run out, so she drew another from the reel, bit the end off, threaded her needle, and began her seam again.

'You need not read the book, if you don't like it,' she said, placing the seam across her knee and fastening it with a pin to keep it steady whilst she sewed.

'But maybe you like it?'

'I do: it's a very good story.'

'What makes you think so?'

'Because you tell me that the end is melancholy. That is true to nature, for the end of all our lives is melancholy; to ourselves, because we look back and see how few of our best wishes we have realised; and to those around us it must be full of melancholy, if they care for us at all. I like sad stories, because the whole world is sad.'

'Oh, rubbish!' exclaimed Polly, flinging the book on to the couch. 'The world is well enough, if we could only take the pleasures that offer themselves, without waiting for pleasures that can never turn up. It's like the foolish vigin, who went through a whole field of wheat without plucking an ear because she always expected to find a bigger one farther on. She ought to have died of shame at her own greediness when she got to the end of the path, and found there was nothing but dwarfs and stubble.'

Polly looked as if she thought there was wisdom as well as spite in what she had said. Sarah stitched away steadily for a few seconds, and then, in her low voice:—

'What would you do, supposing you came to the end of the field without having plucked your ear?'

'Oh, me!' exclaimed Polly, as if the question put the matter in quite another light. 'I would turn back, or look out for another field.'

'You forget that when you have lived your life you cannot turn back,' was the response; and the stitch, stitch, went on with irritating regularity.

Polly felt that she had been pressed into a corner, and got out of it by a method frequently adopted by women—namely, by letting her opponent know that it was no use arguing with her.

'You are always so nasty particular, Sarah, and you can't see a joke.'

'I am afraid I cannot, just now.'

Polly jumped up.

'I'll go over and see uncle Job.'

There was a quick change in Sarah's face, as if it were lighted up by a pleasant thought or hope. She said quietly:

'Isn't it late?'

'Half-past eight—no. He won't be going to bed for an hour yet, and I can be at Marshstead in twenty minutes. The old man likes to have a game at draughts with me, for he says Michael is so stupid that it is not worth playing with him.'

Sarah did not suggest any further objections. She did think of proposing to accompany her, but Michael would no doubt see her home, and then?—perhaps things would right themselves.

Polly's hat and jacket were on in a minute, and she was out on the path which led by the green lawn under the apple-trees to the gate. She caught a glimpse of the new moon for the first time, and she held up her hand to see what she was holding, so that she might know what luck she was to have during the next month. For, according to an old superstition, if you have copper, silver, or gold in hand when you first see the new moon, fortune will favour you in proportion to the value of the metal you happen to be holding. The superstition was also read metaphorically as affecting the general fortunes of the individual. Thus: copper, good; silver, better; gold, best; and if a lad happened to be holding the hand of his sweetheart at the time, it was a sure sign that she was to become his wife.

The latter incident occurred very frequently, but the marriage did not always follow.

Polly laughed at the superstition, and yet just now she would have liked to have had something else than her parasol in hand, for the Fates did not concern themselves with parasols, so far as she had ever heard.

It was still twilight. The bright green of the trees was gradually darkening, and in the distance they looked like black masses, showing fantastic outlines against the pale blue sky. In the still atmosphere there were occasional flutterings and excite-

chirpings of birds as they settled for the night. The barking of dogs, answering each other from distant farms, was heard with singular distinctness. The drowsy perfume of the lime-trees, mingling with that of the hedge sweetbriars and of the new-mown hay, filled the mind with a sense of sweet repose.

As she passed a group of whitewashed and red-tiled cottages, the labourers and their wives were sitting on the doorsteps or on stools, resting after the day's labour. Everybody saluted Polly with a kindly 'Good evening' as she passed.

'Looks like as there was to be a storm to-night,' said one of the men wisely, and knocking the ashes out of his pipe at the same time.

As she walked up the lane leading to Hazell's house, she heard the loud stamp of the horses in the stable, and the grating rattle of the halter rope as it was drawn through the rings which secured them to their stalls.

At Marshstead, as at most of the farms in the district, the door was rarely locked or bolted, and Polly stepped into the hall without knocking. A terrier bounded out of the kitchen with a shrill bark, which was instantly changed to a delighted cry of recognition, and in his cheery welcome he jumped frantically upon Polly and round about her.

'Down, Ted, down,' she said softly, with something more than ordinary pleasure in his greeting.

She knew where to find her guardian. She opened the parlour door, and Ted danced in before her. She entered in this abrupt fashion without having previously thought of doing so, and she expected to see—she did not know what, but in a vague way she had an idea of something quite different from the scene presented to her.

Michael was calmly reading the day's news to his father, who was seated opposite with hands placidly clasped before him, and eyes closed, listening or dozing, no one could say which; but the eyes opened wide whenever the son paused in the reading.

Job Hazell was a little man; his figure had once been burly, but during the last few years he had begun to lose flesh. His face, which had once been ruddy and full even to puffiness, now looked pinched, and was marked by deep lines, which, combined with his white hair, made him appear an older man than he was in reality. He had worked hard in his youth and middle age; he had started three sons fairly in business—one in Australia as a sheep-farmer, another in Virginia, and the third in London. He had given his two daughters very respectable dowries when they married; and his eldest son, Michael, was to have the farm. Job was well known to be one of the most successful farmers of the district, and Michael was regarded as the heir to a very comfortable fortune.

Supper was over, but the table had not been cleared; the bread and cheese and glasses were still standing on it. At the corner beside Job was a big, brown, old-fashioned ale-jug. Around its base were the roughly shaped figures in bas-relief of dogs in full chase after a wooden-looking stag, and at the tail of the last dog was a huntsman blowing a horn so lustily that his cheeks seemed ready to crack. Around the centre were the designs of a windmill, very straight and square; a tree of a bee-hive shape, and a jovial-looking rustic in three positions: first filling his pipe, a mug of foaming ale at his elbow; next drinking with evident relish, and, in the third place, leaning back taking his ease. The jug was a sort of family treasure: it had been in the house for several generations, and unless served in it, Job did not think his ale had the right flavour.

Michael stopped reading, and Job instantly looked up, when Polly entered.

'There's a good wench,' said Job, his face brightening. 'I was wishing for you to come, and here you are; I haven't had a game for three days, and I think Michael has been reading all the driest things he could find in the paper.'

'All right, uncle, we shall have a game, and I am going to beat you to-night,' she said, putting her arms round his neck and kissing him.

The old man chuckled, enjoying the caress and the fun of the idea of his being beaten in the game.

'All right, Polly, all right—we'll see about that. Give us the board, Michael, and I'll give the wench a lesson.'

Michael had not once looked at Polly, and she was aware of that fact. Yet there was no sulkiness in his expression: he simply seemed to have too many serious matters to engage his attention to permit him to bother himself about the presence of a pretty girl. He rose calmly, took the draught-board from a cupboard, and placed it on the table beside his father.

'Thank you,' said Polly, as she began with quite a business-like air to arrange the men. She did not lift her eyes from the board.

Michael nodded, resumed his seat, and, taking up the paper again, became deeply immersed in a leader on the political situation.

Polly became just as deeply interested in the game with Job as Michael appeared to be in his paper. Her eyes brightened, her cheeks flushed, and she watched every movement of the draught men with an eagerness apparently as intense as that of a gambler who is playing his last stake. She laughed excitedly at every successful move she made, and laughed the more when Job, seeing that the game was going against him, became irritable.

The old farmer was very fond of playing, but when he lost the game he was apt to lose his temper too. He would raise petty quibbles to interfere with the movements of his opponent, and in moments of great excitement Polly had even detected him slyly shifting the position of one of his men to his own advantage. She smiled at this weakness, and pretended not to see it. Then, as she allowed him to be the conqueror, she was rewarded by the spectacle of the old man's delight. He would laugh in his feeble falsetto, clasp his hand round his knee, and draw it up nearly to his chin, as if to restrain the expression of his excitement; he would take a gulp of his ale, and then proceed to show that, if at a certain point she had taken this or that particular move, she would have had a chance of winning.

She knew all his little tricks, and good-naturedly opposed him only long enough to give him the satisfaction of feeling that he really had a clever antagonist to overcome; then she played to lose, and paid her penny (that was the highest stake they played for) as promptly as Job was peremptory in demanding it. On the occasions when she could not help winning, it was remarkable that Job never happened to have any coppers in his pocket, and always forgot his losses at their next meeting.

But this night the devil had got into Polly. She looked brighter and prettier than ever, with a dash of merry wickedness in her eyes that might have got over St. Anthony. She intended to win.

'That's a bad move, uncle.'

'I—I didn't mean that, Polly. I'll take it back.'

'No, no, thank you. Touch man, play man. I can't allow you to take it back. Three of your men off and crown mine, please.'

Although Job was always claiming the right to take back a wrong move on his own part, he was very firm in refusing to allow others to do so; and this practical turn of his own laws against himself made him exclaim impatiently:

'You are dreadful particular to-night, Polly.'

Hitherto, Polly had always allowed him to have his own way; to-night she held strictly to the law, and, although she was smiling all the time, she would not yield a point.

Job was puzzled, then annoyed; but as he pretended to be very particular about following the rules of the game, his self-esteem would not permit him to make any appeal to the generosity of his antagonist.

'I told you that I meant to win to-night,' she exclaimed gaily, making another successful move. 'Now I have only two men, but they are crowned. You have two men crowned and one that has not yet left its corner. The odds are on your side, but I shall win yet.'

Job was silent, his brows contracted, and he was thinking of all

the cunning moves he had learned in the practice of many years, seeking one by which he might overcome his remorseless enemy.

The warmth of the players attracted Michael's attention, and he lifted his grave face over the paper to watch the progress of the game. He saw his father's thin lips compressed, his hand hovering nervously now over this piece and then on that, uncertain which to play. He saw Polly's face flushed with amused excitement. He thought it was the prettiest face he had ever seen, and the lithesome figure the finest that ever a woman had possessed to tempt a man to clasp her in his arms.

His heart bounded, and it was only by a severe effort that he restrained himself from drawing his chair nearer and advising her upon the move over which she was at present prettily hesitating, fingers poised in air, lips slightly parted, and eyes full of wondering doubt.

She moved : she won.

Job thrust the board away from him impatiently.

'If I hadn't made that one false move, you couldn't have got the game, Polly,' he grumbled.

'But you did make the false move, and I have won, uncle ; so give me my penny, please.'

She was laughing at the old man's discomfiture, and, in spite of the sober face he had resolved to preserve throughout the evening, Michael laughed too.

'We are no match for her, dad, so you had better pay up.'

Job fumbled in his pockets.

'Haven't got any coppers, Michael—have you ?'

The two young people laughed again at this observation, which they were accustomed to hear whenever Job lost. Michael paid the penny, and Job asked for his pipe to soothe the agitation of his defeat.

Polly jumped up, filled the long churchwarden which she found on the mantelpiece, lit it defiantly, knowing that it annoyed Michael to see her with a pipe in her mouth, and then handed it to her guardian.

'Thank you, Polly ; you're a clever wench, but if it hadn't been for that one move, you'd have lost the game.'

'You can afford to be beaten for once, uncle ; you know I never get more than one game out of ten, and you shall have your revenge the next night we play,' she answered, adjusting her hat the aid of the mirror over the chimney-piece. 'Now I must go.'

'I will see you home,' said Michael, laying aside his paper and rising.

'Please, don't trouble ; I know the way well enough, and can take care of myself.'

She had never made such an objection before, and she had never spoken to him in such a tone—a tone which seemed to imply dislike.

'It will be more satisfactory to us, if you will permit me to see you safe home.'

His voice was as cold and his words as measured as if he had been speaking to an ungracious stranger.

'In that case, you can come if you like, but it is really putting you to unnecessary trouble.'

Michael made no response. He went out to the hall, took his hat and a staff, whistled to Ted, who came forth leaping and barking, delighted by the idea of an evening scamper, and they waited outside the door for their mistress. She said 'Good-night' to Job, promised to return soon, and passed forth.

'Come along, Ted,' she exclaimed cheerily to the dog, and he, with a bark, careered on in front, darting hither and thither, and returning occasionally for some token of approval. Then she would say, 'Good dog,' and off he would go again as if he were exhilarated by the moonlight which gleamed upon the hedgerows and on the green fields, and came in silver shafts through the openings of the trees, causing the neighbouring shades to appear intensely black.

But she did not speak to Michael. She walked rapidly, as if eager to get over the ground. He accommodated his pace to hers, and made no attempt to open a conversation. She kept her lips close as if determined not to utter a word, and yet she was angry with him for his silence.

They passed down the green lane and into the main road, the white ground of which glimmered in the moonlight, and the shadows of the waving branches of the trees made wonderful kaleidoscopic forms upon it. She halted by a stile.

'I'll go through the meadow,' she said; 'it is a shorter way than going round by the cottages.'

Michael was aware that she said 'I'll go,' not 'We'll go,' and knew that she wished to show him how indifferent she was to his escort.

There were two steps and a bar to cross: he offered his hand to assist her. Without heeding the proffered aid, she sprang up the steps and leaped down on the other side, quite conscious that she was displaying two pretty white ankles. The dog had darted under the stile, and was already scampering across the meadow. Michael followed.

Then, as if to keep herself company, she began to hum the air of a rustic ballad. She was either wicked in her selection or unlucky, for Michael had often heard the song sung at harvest homes, and the words of one particular verse kept time in his head to her humming:

There was a maid, and she was fair,
Sing hey ho, the wind and rain:
She lost her heart, and she didn't know where,
Sing hey ho, but it caused her pain.

They reached the green gate, with its two apple-trees, one each side, standing like sentinels over it. There was still a light in the parlour, for Sarah was waiting—and hoping.

‘I suppose it is too late for you to go in?’ she said, indifferently, and as if the question were forced from her as a mere form of politeness, and not because she had any wish for his society.

‘Yes.’

There was a brief but a very awkward pause: each wanted to say something and could not. She broke the spell.

‘Then I suppose we had better say good-night.’

‘I suppose so—good-night.’

‘Good-night.’

She placed her hand on the latch of the gate, but suddenly wheeled round to him again. He had not moved. The moonlight fell full on his calm face, the apple-trees cast a shadow over hers.

‘You are dreadfully sulky, Michael; you haven’t spoken one word to me all the way.’

‘You never looked at me all the way, and I thought you were too happy in your own thoughts to care for anything I could say.’

‘You might have asked about the cow,’ she exclaimed, wildly seeking some sort of ground for accusation against him.

‘But I knew the cow was doing very well,’ he answered, almost laughing at the absurdity of the position.

That was too much for her, and she got into a passion.

‘You are as aggravating as you are sulky,’ she cried. ‘Heaven pity the woman who marries you!’

Suddenly he stretched out his arm and grasped her hand.

‘Will you marry me, and see what will happen?’

‘No!’

She flung his hand from her, and marched up the path. He stood watching until the door closed. Then he whistled for Ted, and turned homeward at a slow pace, and much perplexed in mind. He had been sulky; there was no doubt about it, although he had only intended to show that he could obey her wishes in silence, and would submit to anything for her sake. She had been cruel, yet her passion seemed to indicate—what? He dared not answer that question as he yearned to do.

‘I’ll punish him, somehow,’ cried Polly fiercely, entering the parlour, and flinging down her hat.

Sarah looked up from her sewing, and her hope vanished: she knew there had been no reconciliation.

(To be continued.)



' Looking up and down the road.'

BELGRAVIA.

FEBRUARY 1879.

Queen of the Meadow.

BY CHARLES GIBBON.

CHAPTER VI.

POLLY'S WICKED MEDITATIONS.

ON the morning after her visit to Marshstead, Polly was out in time to see the haymakers begin work. There had been rain during the night, and from the river and the lowlying fields rose a thick white mist, through which the sun had not yet pierced his way. The grass was wet, and the outspread hay would require a good deal of tossing and baking in the sun before it could be stacked. There was a sweet smell in the air, for the sweetbrier and the hedgerows gave forth their freshest perfume at this hour.

When Polly first stepped out there was a mysterious hush in the atmosphere. There were chestnuts still in bloom, but the bloom was draggled and battered by the rain; underneath, broad, dark shadows. Here and there was a bright pink may, blushing like a nymph amidst the surrounding verdure as the morning light revealed her charms. The fields were yellow with buttercups, forming plains of brilliant gold and green. The cattle were quite still, as if they were waiting for something to follow the silence; and the white, cozy-looking farmstead gave one a feeling of comfort as it gradually emerged from the mist.

Presently the loud song of blackbird and thrush broke the silence; and, as if that had been the conductor's signal, robin, sparrow, wren, chaffinch, and tiny oxeye joined in a glad chorus. Then the crows started with an incessant 'caw-caw'; the hens, hurrying out from their roosts, cackled frantically, and the cocks crowed with a sense of dignity and command. There was the loud boo-hoo of him of the barn-door, resembling in some degree the prolonged howl of a chained mastiff the short querulous answer

of the bantam, and a shrill grating cry from a slim, silver-grey speckled Hamburg dandy; whilst one of the cows rattled her horn against the wooden guards of a young tree, as if preparing for battle. What were they all talking about?

By and by there was a lull amongst the cocks, who left the discussion entirely to the crows, occasional remarks being heard from distant barnyards, where the crowing had been caught up and was now being echoed. Meanwhile the gentlemen of the meadow scraped the earth and dungheap, and cackled to their ladies an invitation to come and share the treasures they had discovered.

When Polly turned towards the house for breakfast, at eight, the sun had broken through the mist, and the long blades of wet grass shone in the light like elfin parks of glistening bayonets. Her hands were clasped behind her and her head was bent, as if she were busy with some thought of deep importance. In this way she passed through the orchard, went round the house instead of entering it, crossed the lawn, and stood at the gate, looking up and down the road.

Coming from the direction of the village was a little man, who moved at a steady jog-trot pace, making use of a thick staff to help him along. In his left hand he held a bundle of letters and newspapers, and across his shoulders was slung a leathern bag. He wore a dingy brown short coat, left unbuttoned, in order that he might have the benefit of the breeze; his well-worn breeches were turned up at the foot, above his thick, laced boots, to protect them from the mud; and a peaked cap completed his attire. In his mouth was a short black clay pipe, which, like the staff, had been the companion of his daily rounds for many years.

Zachariah Rowe was the rural postman. He had delivered the letters of the district for thirty years—'with punctuality and despatch,' as he was always particular in stating. His rounds increased in extent as the population increased, but his pay remained the same. He was always threatening to resign. He was a fierce Radical, and was prominent at working men's meetings in loudly declaiming against the landowners, and especially against the Earl, for the wickedness of preserving so much valuable land for his own amusement. Tithes and disestablishment were also subjects on which he was an authority. He felt himself to be a power in the district; by many humble followers he was believed to be so; and the people whom he abused admired the honesty of the man and laughed at his opinions.

'Good morning, Zachy,' said Polly as he approached. 'Anything for me?'

'Mornin', miss,' he answered, taking the pipe from his mouth,

placing his staff under his arm, and examining the letters and papers in his hand. 'There's a paper and three letters, two from the village and one from I don't know where.'

Zachy regarded it as part of his duty to be able to tell people where their letters came from, and it was a cause of some vexation to him when the roundabout routes by which some letters were sent to their destination defied his experience and curiosity to discover their starting-point.

'There are only two letters and a paper here,' she said, looking at them.

'Here's t'other, miss' (he was turning it over in his hand), 'and it's the one that comes from I don't know where.'

Polly looked at the superscription, and she too was puzzled, for she did not recognize the penmanship. She opened the letter, and with some surprise exclaimed:

'It's from Walton Abbey!'

'Oh, that's it—goes to London, back to Chelmsford, and then on here. They might save trouble, and let me take it on at once. Mornin', miss.'

And Zachy put his pipe in his mouth and trotted away, quite happy now that he knew whence the letter had come.

Polly was much perplexed. If the letter had been from Tom Walton she would not have been surprised, for he had impudence for anything. But it was from his eldest sister, with whom she had never exchanged more than a distant bow; for Miss Walton, being the grand-daughter of an Alderman of the City of London, was so condescending in her manners to the farmers, their wives and daughters, that they kept aloof from her, without in the least admitting her superiority.

The letter said:—

Walton Abbey: Friday, June 13.

My dear Miss Holt,—We are to have a few friends here on Tuesday, at one o'clock; if the day is fine, we are to have a picnic in the ruins of the old Abbey; if the day is not fine, we are to have luncheon in the house and amuse ourselves as best we can. Sir Montague Lewis has promised to join us if his health will permit; also the Vicar and Miss Arnold. Will you and Miss Hodson honour us with your company? My brother Thomas would have delivered this himself, but he has unfortunately sprained his ankle, and he is so anxious to be able to enjoy himself on Tuesday that he will not risk leaving his couch at present.

Yours very truly,

ELIZABETH WALTON.

P.S.—My mother desires me to send her compliments, and to say that she would be very much pleased to see you both.

Polly's first impulse was to tear this grandiloquent epistle into fragments and throw it to the winds. She felt the vulgarity of it,

and that its affectation of superiority was an insult. She had never cared about the batch of Walton girls: at this moment she hated them. They could strum on the piano; and, on the strength of having been twelve months at a second-rate boarding-school in Boulogne and a fortnight in Paris, they professed to be efficient French scholars. But everybody knew that they had never turned a hand to useful work, and that their whole thoughts were devoted to the preparation of showy dresses and the cultivation of grand airs, in the hope of attracting the attention of any eligible young man who might appear—or old man either, for the matter of that. It was said that Miss Walton had even ‘set her cap’ at Sir Montague Lewis, the rich, but old and liverless, Indian lawyer. They had started a brougham, when everybody knew they were as nearly insolvent as anybody could be without being forced into the Court of Bankruptcy. But, worst of all, the third daughter, Caroline, after sundry disappointments, had been known to cast longing eyes towards Marshstead farm—as if Michael Hazell would ever think of bringing such a doll as that to his home!

This was all very spiteful on Polly’s part, and the remembrance of the association of Michael with Caroline Walton made her more spiteful.

He was just like other young men, and why should he not be attracted by pretty dresses, coaxing smiles, and the appearances of superior training and position which the Walton girls maintained, let those laugh who would?

She was sure that he did not care for them, and that he would not like her to go there, if for no other reason than that she would meet Tom Walton—who was much the best of the family, she thought, bad as he might be.

There was a bright idea—she had it in her power to annoy Michael! Her views regarding the tenor of the note became instantly modified.

She had been walking up and down the lawn under the apple-trees. Two neat-handed maidens in yellow print dresses came forth to hang up clothes, and Polly made for the house. Sarah met her at the door.

‘I was just coming to see if you meant to take any breakfast this morning—it’s more than half-past eight.’

‘Read that.’

She thrust the letter into Sarah’s hand, sat down to her breakfast, and ate with good appetite.

When, in her quiet methodical way, Sarah had read the invitation, she laid it down and began to pour out the tea.

‘Of course you will say No, Polly?’ she remarked.

‘Of course I shall say Yes,’ was Polly’s answer, plying her knife and fork energetically, and enjoying her cousin’s surprise.

‘But I thought you did not care about the Waltons?’

‘What has that to do with it?’

‘Well, you used to say that there were so many nice people in the world and so many pleasant things to do, that it was not worth while bothering about the unpleasant people or things.’

‘Ah, but this is one of the pleasant things.’

‘When did you change your regard for the people?’

‘Never said I had changed it’ (speaking through a mouthful of ham and egg).

‘Then, what pleasure do you expect?’

‘The pleasure of vexing Michael. You know as well as I do that he will be vexed at my going there,—and that’s why I’m going. I’ll answer for you as well as myself, after breakfast. Some more tea, please.’

Whether it was the mere habit into which she had fallen of giving way to anything that Polly declared her determination to do, or that the motives of this particular action afforded her some secret satisfaction, Sarah said nothing more. Indeed, she knew that it would have been useless, for Polly became the more obstinate the more she was opposed.

After breakfast Polly took her desk, and, in terms of as severe politeness as she could construct, accepted the invitation. She was excited and delighted by the opportunity so promptly offered to her of doing something that would pain Michael. She could see his grave face, with the brows slightly contracted, as he watched her flirtation with Tom Walton; and she laughed to herself as she imagined the severe things he would say if he only uttered his thought. But he would keep it to himself and suffer the more—all on her account. That was a revenge for his stubborn silence last night.

Then she went out to look after the sick cow.

CHAPTER VII.

TOM’S FUN.

If Polly had only known what a degree of management and diplomacy Tom Walton had been obliged to exercise in order to obtain that invitation, she would have refused it, notwithstanding the opportunity it afforded for spiting Michael.

Although there was no deliberate conspiracy to that effect, it was generally understood amongst the Walton girls, with the full

though unexpressed endorsement of the mother, that Master Tom was not to be allowed to bring a wife to Walton until all the young ladies had been provided with suitable partners. They were all perfectly sensible of their position : they had not a penny to expect from their father's estate, but they had a hundred pounds each, bequeathed to them by their grandfather, Alderman Smith. Of this small dowry they were careful never to spend a penny, no matter what difficulties about money matters there might be in the house. They were not at all displeased to find the sum magnified by country gossip into a fortune : they were careful, however, not to commit themselves on that head.

They knew that if Tom married, his wife would certainly require to be mistress of the house, and they would require to find quarters elsewhere. So it was tacitly agreed that Tom should not marry at present ; and Tom, finding that by 'putting on the screw,' as he phrased it, and threatening to commit that crime against the laws of the house, he could get money sufficient to enable him to scramble on without bothering himself about the work of the place, was quite content to let things glide.

Consequently, although there was a great struggle made to attract young men of income to Walton Abbey, there was a decided objection to the introduction of young ladies, any one of whom might catch the wavering fancies of the big brother.

He made fun of the 'sistern' remorselessly, and could defy them when the occasion was important enough—such as going to the Derby or the Goodwood ; but in other respects he laughed in his sleeve and left them to their own devices. His youngest sister, Caroline, was the only one of the three who obtained even a small share of his confidence. To her he would sometimes reveal the sorrows which his betting transactions had brought upon him, and by her management he was sometimes enabled to pay his most pressing debts without a 'scene' in the family council.

His eldest sister, Elizabeth, was like a nightmare to him.

'She is always scolding me,' he would say to Carry, 'and always giving me good advice, and of all the things I detest I think good advice stands in the superlative degree. Why can't she let a fellow alone and mind her own business?—that will be hard enough work, I can tell you, if she ever hopes to get married. I think if she ever happened to advise me to go to the Derby I shouldn't go, just because she advised me to do so. I hope she never will, for it would be hard lines to deny myself.'

He was a droll compound of weakness, selfishness, and good-nature.

Polly had caught fast hold of some part of his nature ; but,

because of his disinclination to be bothered by anything, he would have given her up at once if he had known that she was engaged to Hazell. But when Hazell told him that the chances were equal, he would *not* give up the chase. Self-respect, to say nothing of the prize to be gained, would not permit him to resign the idea that he might win the prettiest, cleverest, richest girl in the district. Besides, she was the only girl he had ever really cared for—but he had said that to himself about so many!

When he first heard of the proposed pic-nic he thought it would be a capital chance to spend a day with Polly and to introduce her to the family. But he proceeded cautiously in his endeavours to secure the invitation.

He was lying in a hammock, swung between two oak-trees on the lawn, placidly smoking, whilst Carry was seated on an iron chair close by, patiently reading a novel to him; and Bones lay on the grass beneath, giving an occasional growl in order to make his presence known. All this indulgence was due to the sprained ankle.

Knocking the ashes out of his pipe and leisurely refilling it, he said, with the utmost indifference to the whole affair:

‘And I suppose, whilst you three go on with all your fun, I am to play dummy, and may not ask a friend of mine to the spree?’

‘Why, Tom, who would you like to ask?’

‘Beelzebub.’

Whilst she laughed he relit his pipe and smoked hard, as if he were getting up the steam for the next stage.

‘I don’t think we should enjoy the presence of that gentleman, Tom; but you know you can ask anyone else you please.’

‘Suppose I wanted you and the Angel’ (that was Elizabeth and fun), ‘to invite two ladies?’

‘Oh!’

And the ‘Oh!’ said very plainly, ‘That’s quite another thing.’

‘Just so,’ he said in an injured tone; ‘I may ask anybody I like, unless that person happens to wear petticoats.’

‘Nonsense, Tom.’

‘Don’t be a fool, Carry—if you can help it. You know that I understand the whole business. However, Miss Holt has to come here, at any rate, and I would rather she came when we could give her a little enjoyment—I wish it for a personal reason.’

‘What is that, Tom?’ (quickly, the book dropping on to her lap, and her eyes turned to his).

Walton grinned, enjoying the start, and wishing he could give the Angel one.

‘Don’t be scared; she doesn’t want me, but a good trotting horse

for her wagonette, and I believe I could sell Jim to her at a good profit.'

Of course this was all a fabrication; he had never talked to Polly about her buying Jim, although he had promised to let her see what he could do as a trotter in harness. But he thought this was a capital idea for gaining his end. He did not regard it as a falsehood at all.

'You'll have to speak to Lizzie about it yourself. I'll tell her you want her.'

Carry rose and made for the house. Presently Miss Walton came forth: a woman with large, strong features, and somewhat pale. Her hair had once been fair, but had become a dusky brown in the course of her years, which numbered thirty-two. She was very primly dressed in a black silk gown, large white lace collar and cuffs. It was one of her notions of dignity to be always ready to receive company. She was attentive to household affairs all the same; and, when she felt sure that there were no visitors near, her shrill voice could be heard all over the place scolding everybody, with and without reason.

She was very severe upon Tom for proposing to add strangers to the party of friends—intimate friends—whom they had invited.

'Very well,' said Tom, as if he were indifferent. 'I'll just drive the horse over to the Meadow and let Miss Holt see him there.'

That was bad.

'Have you been there before, Tom?' (Softening under her alarm.)

'Of course.'

That was worse.

'Often?'

'Very often, when I have been out fishing.'

That was worst.

There was something grim about the mouth of Miss Walton. She began to fear, and she did not understand how all this could have been going on without her knowledge, for she was one of the most proficient collectors of all the gossip of the county. Her first thought was—'Has Tom committed himself?' the second, 'Is this business about the horse quite true?' (They had all a faculty for mixing up truth and falsehood in such a way that it would have puzzled an arbiter to tell where the lie came in; and the droll part of the problem was, that none of them were conscious that they were not perfectly truthful, although they would suspect each other.) The third thought was: 'What am I to do?'

Walton had turned himself round in the hammock as if the

matter were settled and there was nothing more to engage his attention. He called 'Bones,' and the dog leaped in beside him. Then he pulled his ears, pulled his tail, and made fun with the ugly-looking dog, who took it all in good part and joined in the sport by pretending to growl and snap at his master's hand, which he took in his mouth tenderly.

'Very well, Tom, I'll write and ask Miss Holt,' said Miss Walton after her troubled meditations; 'but you know she does not quite belong to our society.'

'Now, drop it, Lizzie,' interrupted Walton with real impatience this time. 'You mean that she's not a man. You need not ask her unless you like.'

'But I will do it to please you.'

'Very well, if you do you must also ask her cousin, Miss Hodsoll, for they are always together.'

Another lady! This was almost too much for Miss Walton; but she saw that her brother was in 'one of his tempers.' She thought it best to say nothing and to leave him.

Walton laughed heartily at the success of his stratagem; there was anything but laughter, however, amongst the ladies. They were surprised, aggrieved, and yet curious to see what would happen when Miss Holt appeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

WALTON ABBEY.

THEIR worst fears were confirmed in the course of the picnic day. Walton's ankle had not recovered from the effects of the sprain, but they were unable to persuade him not to attempt to walk. He would get up, and he would walk. His mother with real concern reminded him that a sprained ankle was a serious thing, and if carelessly treated might result in the amputation of the whole leg, and all sorts of other calamities.

Mrs. Walton was a little stout woman, who did exactly what her daughters directed, but she was always lecturing them on the 'proprieties,' and telling them how to do things as they were done in London society.

'Remember, my dears,' she would say on every occasion when there was to be any particular display of grandeur, 'that my poor dear papa would have been Lord Mayor of London if he had only lived two years longer, and then he would have been made a baronet, my dears, for the gentleman who was Lord Mayor of that year was made a baronet, because he received the Prince of Wales

and gave him luncheon. I'm sure my papa would have given his Royal Highness luncheon and dinner too, if he had only been there—and he would have done it better than anybody else!

This with a sense of pride in the remembrance of the Alderman's magnificence and hospitality. Walton gave little heed to these exordiums; but the girls were proud of their descent from a possible baronet.

The day was a great one for the house of Walton. Sir Montague Lewis did come, in spite of his liver. He paid compliments to all the ladies one after the other; and to Miss Walton, as she thought and the others thought, he was particularly attentive. Tom was not interested in him or the two young gentlemen who arrived shortly after. He was at the window watching for Polly, and when he saw her driving up the avenue he left the room and met her at the door.

He offered his hand to help her to descend, but she pushed it aside and jumped down. He offered similar aid to Sarah, and she accepted it. Whilst they were thus engaged Michael Hazell rode up to the door.

That was a surprise for Walton: he had known nothing about his rival being invited. But immediately he comprehended that 'the Angel' had prepared a countermine in order to save the big brother. He admired her ingenuity, and muttered something unpleasant regarding it.

Polly, too, was surprised, but she took a vicious pleasure in thinking that now she could see how he endured his punishment. Besides, why should he object to her visiting the Waltons when he came himself?

She had no idea that he had accepted the invitation only because Sarah had told him that Polly was to be there.

'Hallo, Hazell—I didn't know you were coming, but glad to see you all the same,' said Walton, thinking it necessary to make some show of hospitality, if for no other reason than to show Polly that he could be liberal.

Hazell accepted the welcome at its real value; but he, also, was determined to show Polly that he could be liberal, and he shook hands with Walton with the cordiality of a man who was out for a day's pleasuring, and resolved not to allow trifles to interfere with his enjoyment.

Polly was pointedly indifferent in her greetings to Michael; pointedly mirthful in speaking to Walton as she accompanied him to the drawing-room.

Michael and Sarah were left to follow, and the latter whispered to her companion in a curiously harsh undertone:

‘Michael, you’re a fool.’

‘Upon my soul I begin to think so, since I cannot keep away from her, when I see that she does not want me.’

‘Nonsense! it is you she cares for.’

‘I wish I could believe that.’

‘All this is done merely to annoy you, because you have offended her somehow.’

It was pleasant to hear, but difficult to believe, under the circumstances. That was not *his* Polly. But surely there must be some mistake, and perhaps it was not on his own side. He would try to find out.

In the drawing-room the tall, graceful figure of Polly appeared as that of a queen amongst the other ladies. She wore a perfectly plain grey dress, and a broad-brimmed felt hat, turned up a little at one side, and surrounded by a black feather.

Miss Walton, vexed by her beauty as much as by the matter-of-fact way in which she seemed to accept all the honour and glory of being invited to such a distinguished gathering—as if she had been born to it, indeed!—could not help feeling that this was a most dangerous person to have introduced to the house.

Sir Montague Lewis recognised one of his best tenants, and a very handsome woman. He was a gallant even in his old age, and at once advanced to greet her with the same courtesy he would have shown towards an equal. This secured for Polly a position, and everybody felt bound to follow the example of the baronet. So she became the leader where it had been intended that she should play only a very humble part.

Whilst this was going on Tom Walton found an opportunity to whisper to Carry:

‘You take charge of young Hazell—he is worth catching, I can tell you.’

‘Worth catching!’ she began indignantly, as if such an idea had never entered her head.

‘Hush!’ he interrupted, nodding to her, as if he quite understood what she was going to say, and quite believed it. ‘Do it—for my sake.’

And she did it—for his sake. Michael found himself engaged in conversation with Carry almost immediately; and although his answers were not always quite clear, she did not mind, and he made violent efforts to withdraw his attention from Polly and to pay proper respect to the little lady beside him. So it happened that, when the party had orders to move, he felt obliged to accept her as his companion.

The day being fine and the grass dry, the luncheon had been

spread in the court of the old Abbey. Sir Montague would fain have had Polly for his partner—he being a landlord who believed in the advantage of mixing on friendly terms with his tenants on certain occasions. But Miss Walton was by his side, and her brother had apparently secured Miss Holt, as they were together laughing and chatting in a way which apparently indicated that they intended to join the procession in company. Sir Montague resigned himself to his fate and did his best to earn the repute of being a thorough beau. This was very pleasant to Miss Walton. She put her own construction on his polite phrases, and had an idea that ‘Lady Lewis’ would sound very well in the ears and look beautiful on a card.

Polly was mischievously inclined to-day. She saw that Michael was distressed by the pleasure she appeared to find in Walton’s company; still, she had an underlying feeling that she was doing wrong to both men. But Michael’s calmness irritated her; there was no reproach, only sadness in his eyes as he watched her, and she could not stand that. If he would speak out and scold her!—but then she remembered that if he had done so she would have resented his interference just as much as she now secretly resented his silence. She was perverse, and became the more determined in her persecution; but, all the time, the line of the rustic ballad, ‘Hey ho, but it caused her pain,’ was haunting her mind—and heart.

Walton was in ecstasies; he had gained the day, and he talked to her with the ease and confidence of a successful lover.

The ruins of the Abbey were only about three-quarters of a mile distant from the house, and the party walked by a pathway through a field of ripening grain, the green and yellow slowly mingling and shining under the sunlight. The ruins stood on the highest point of the country, and afforded an excellent view of the surrounding landscape. Close by, undulating fields, and beyond, flat meadows and marshes; and here and there woods, dense with their summer foliage, sloped down towards the river.

The ruins consisted of portions of two sides of a square; large blocks of stone jutting up through the ground marked the extent of the building. The outlines of the walls which were still standing were fantastically irregular, as the stones had dropped now from one place and then from the other. But these stones had formed a pile beneath a large window—made larger by the ravages of time—and by climbing this pile you could see a panorama of the country all around.

The luncheon on the grass was apparently a success; the baronet was very facetious, the young men were very attentive to the

ladies (Walton was much too attentive to Polly, Michael thought), and Mrs. Walton felt that the dignity of her honoured father, Alderman Smith, had been properly sustained. She felt that she was in her true position at this moment, presiding over a feast, as her father would have done if he had only lived long enough to become Lord Mayor—a misfortune which she never ceased to deplore.

Luncheon over, the party started to mount the *débris*, at the top of which they would have the panoramic view of the county so much praised. There was much fun in the climbing and much laughter.

Walton, although an interesting invalid, declared he was determined to go up if Polly went; and she, laughing, said she would help him—that in the hearing of Michael.

He took her offered arm—not leaning upon it, but clasping it (and she did not like that, although she kept up the farce)—and moved forward with her after the others, who were now on the top of the pile of fallen stones gazing on the landscape from the large window.

As they began the ascent he stumbled; she held him up, wondering at this sudden weakness; their faces were close together, and—he would have kissed her, believing all backs turned, but there was a cry from above—

‘Oh, Tom!’

It was Miss Walton; and all eyes were turned upon the two below.

Polly became crimson, then pale. She looked up fiercely—~~was~~ going to speak, but checked herself and calmly continued to ~~assist~~ the man with the injured ankle up the rugged steep.

Sir Montague Lewis drew the attention of Miss Walton to a point of beauty in the landscape, and she instantly gave her attention to him.

Polly was full of indignation with Walton, and still more with herself. After a little while she did not feel at all angry with him, but only with herself. She had deliberately permitted him to regard himself as her lover; she had coquetted with him; she had allowed him to fancy that he had won her. All her pretty scheme of punishment had turned back upon herself. No doubt Michael suffered—for he had seen and heard—but she suffered ten times more, for she had the consciousness of having tried to cause pain.

There was another who suffered, but she did not know.

Polly was very strong, or else she would have sat down on one of the stones and cried. As it was, she was grateful to Sir Montague Lewis, for she understood the kindly intention which had induced

him to draw the attention of Miss Walton to the scenery. She went up, calmly surveyed the scene, and descended with the others, still, however, boldly assisting Tom: he in his vanity taking this as a token of the favour he desired to win.

Immediately on their return to the house she desired the wagonette to be got ready, as it was necessary that she should be home before five o'clock. Hazell, who had not spoken a word, quietly went out and got the trap ready. There were objections—very formal ones—she must stay for tea, as it was just about to be brought in. She did not wish to make any fuss or to show her annoyance more than she could help, so she agreed to stay. Then there were more formal desires that she should remain for the evening. Michael broke in at this point, finishing his cup of tea at a gulp.

'I am going your way, Miss Holt, and am unfortunately obliged to leave at once. I shall be glad to see you so far on your way.'

Polly felt very much relieved and very grateful to the man she had been trying to wound.

'Don't trouble about that, Hazell,' said Walton; 'I shall ride over with Miss Holt.'

'Thank you,' said Polly rising. 'If you will excuse us, Mrs. Walton, we will start just now. I see the wagonette is at the door.'

'Oh, certainly, my dear,' said poor Mrs. Walton, who was sadly puzzled by the peculiar manner of the different people, and who did not know how to act, as she had no opportunity of obtaining directions from her daughters.

Miss Walton was gracious to a degree—was so sorry that Polly had to go, and hoped she would soon return. It was a pity that she could not stay, as they were going to have some music, but she would make arrangements to remain later next time. 'Good-bye.'

Walton and Hazell were both at the door, and both eager to help her into the wagonette.

'I like to help myself,' she said, not looking at either, and stepped in. Sarah was already seated. 'Good evening, Mr. Walton.' And she drove away.

Michael mounted and rode after her, making no attempt to enter into conversation.

CHAPTER IX.

POLLY'S PUZZLE.

POLLY was too savage to observe the coldness of Sarah's manner, which was as much indicated by her silence (although she was rarely talkative) as by the pallor of her face, the tightly closed lips, and the dark eyes staring straight before her, yet evidently seeing nothing.

Michael was riding close behind, and could easily have spoken to them; he might even have ridden beside them for the greater part of the way; but he did not. Polly was irritated by his silence, and yet her tongue was tied by the vexation which she felt in having played a part she disliked, and failed in it.

'We've had a pleasant day, haven't we?' she said to her companion bitterly, and giving the horse a cut with the whip. The animal was so astounded by such an unusual display of vigour that he set off at a gallop, which was instantly checked by the driver.

'As pleasant as could be expected,' answered Sarah abruptly, and without turning her head.

The conversation dropped; and Polly's grasp of the reins lightened. As the sun was setting there was a bright yellow stream on the horizon bordered by a dark blue line. The glow of the setting sun fell on their faces, making Sarah's more ghastly white and Polly's more uncomfortably red than before. By-and-by:—

'How do you like Walton?' she asked abruptly.

Sarah for a moment appeared to be taken aback. Then, with slow emphasis,

'Very much.'

They were not looking at each other as they spoke.

'You used to see a good deal of him when your father was alive. Was he always—as agreeable as he is now?'

'Always. You seem to be interested in him.'

'Of course I am, as I would be in any other animal who showed a kindly feeling towards me. Didn't you see the spite in the eyes of his sisters, and how he protected me from it?'

'No.'

'Then you must have been looking at something else.'

That was true enough, for Sarah had been more interested in watching the progress of the flirtation between her cousin and Walton than in observing anything else, and consequently she had seen little else. The 'pleasant' day had been one of long suffering to her; for she began to see the last shadows of a hope she had cherished so very dearly; and now Polly was, unconsciously,

doing everything she could to make her believe that the hope was entirely vain.

As for Hazell, whilst he was strong enough to bide his time, he was sad at heart. He had entertained romantic notions of the perfect union of man and woman in thought as well as deed. He did not yet understand the impossibility of such union beyond the first hour of first love, when neither sees or believes in anything beyond the other. By and by, there comes a thought, perhaps a wish, which duty suppresses and discretion hides: from that moment the union is broken, and the two are not the same. They may pass on through life calmly and without a breath of scandal, entertaining their friends and rearing children; good people, kind and affectionate towards each other; but the perfect union of thought and wish, as well as heart, has passed away. The man or woman who retains some memory of the romantic devotion of youth is sad enough when compelled to recognise the prosaic fact that the only permanent tie is that of convenience, obedience to the social laws, and the common give-and-take, which enables two people to bear the foibles of each other rather than venture upon the evils which might happen if an open breach were made. This is sensible, and the world could not get on comfortably if there were not such a number of people who speedily fall into the ordinary course of things.

But there are those who suffer much in adopting this wise order of nature, and still look longingly for the impossible creature who would be always true and faithful in thought as well as deed.

And Michael Hazell still looked towards Polly—in spite of her flirtation with Walton, which had been plain enough—as that impossible she. But when Sarah graciously informed him that he was a fool, he, in his own mind, quite agreed with her. He was a fool, or why should he follow this will-o'-the-wisp that was leading him he did not know whither?

But he could not help himself; reason was out of court, and he *would* follow, let the end be what it might. The eagerness she had displayed to get away from Walton Abbey, and Sarah's words, comforted him. If he could only believe that Sarah was not mistaken!

As they neared the end of the journey, they came to a cross-road, and Michael should have parted company with them there if he desired to take the shortest way home.

Polly stopped, and he was instantly beside the wagonette.

'I suppose you leave us here?' she said.

'Oh, no, I'll go round by the Meadow; it does not make much difference in the distance, and the mare is quite fresh.'

‘Very well.’

She drove on, and now Michael rode beside her. He wanted to say something, but was unable to discover anything that he thought sufficiently good to interest her. At length he hit upon quite an original observation :

‘We had a very fine day for the pic-nic.’

‘The day was a great deal finer than the people,’ was the ungracious reply ; ‘but you seemed to enjoy yourself.’

‘How?’

‘With Miss Carry.’

The retort was on his lips—‘And you appeared to enjoy yourself with Walton ;’ but he just smiled and said carelessly :—

‘She is a very agreeable girl.’

‘Ah, they are all too grand for the likes of me. I shall not go there again.’

‘Are you sure?’

He put the question too eagerly : she caught his meaning in an instant. She had been trying to punish him that day, and she had suffered most herself ; but there was an opportunity to hit him again. So, with a half smiling, half malicious side-glance and a mock seriousness of manner :—

‘Well, there might be circumstances under which it would be necessary for me to go there ; but it will never be necessary for me to endure the patronage of the Misses Walton.’

Michael was puzzled : when he was much interested he was slow to perceive a joke. He regarded life as a very serious business, and, at present, love was one of its most serious troubles in his eyes. What he did catch was that she thought of marrying Walton as a possible event, and that she was already speculating about the conditions on which she would accept him—one being the removal of his sisters from the house.

‘You shall never marry him, Polly.’

That was Sarah who spoke, still with her eyes fixed straight ahead ; the tone was low, yet harsh.

Polly and Michael were both startled for an instant by this interruption ; for Sarah had been so silent all the time that they had almost forgotten her presence.

‘You speak as if you had a cold, Sarah,’ said Polly, as much amused as surprised by the peculiar tone of her cousin’s voice.

‘I am cold,’ said she, shivering, although it was a summer evening.

‘Then draw the rug closer around you,’ was the practical suggestion. ‘We’ll be home in a few minutes, and you can get something warm and go to bed.’

Sarah was stubbornly silent; the advice was good, and kindly meant, but it sounded to her like satire. As if 'something warm and bed' could remove the bitterness that was at her heart!

The two girls had lived together long enough to get accustomed to each other's occasional fits of ill-humour. As a rule, Sarah was the most patient of the two; and now Polly showed that she also could endure; for Sarah was dumbly petulant. Polly never even remotely suspected the cause of her cousin's state: she attributed it entirely to the fact of her having been forced to go to the Waltons, and to indigestion.

'You must take a good rest to-night, Sarah, and you'll be all right to-morrow.'

On arriving at the Meadow Farm, Michael was invited to have supper; and when the ladies had taken off their outer garments, the table was laid in the little parlour, and Sarah went to the kitchen to toast some bread.

Michael talked of the various matters connected with the farm; Polly joined in, just as if there had been no disturbance in the relations between them; but presently they both felt somewhat awkward, for the supper was waiting and Sarah had not returned, whilst the subjects of conversation were exhausted. Polly said she would go and see what detained her cousin.

Sarah was alone in the kitchen, crouching in front of the fire, toasting bread and silently crying. Polly was beside her before she was aware of her presence and saw the tears running down the pale cheeks.

'What is the matter with you, Sarah?' she exclaimed in amazement, and with a degree of irritation that anybody should be whining without an apparent cause.

Sarah's grim silence throughout the journey home—only broken by that one bitter exclamation, 'You shall never marry him, Polly!'—and her evident distress at present, were incomprehensible to Polly.

Sarah sprang to her feet:—

'There is nothing the matter with me,' she answered sharply and with a sullen frown. 'The toast is ready, and we can have our supper now.'

Polly stared, mouth and eyes wide open in dumb bewilderment. The tears were gone from the face of her cousin, and there stood before her only the cold, practical woman, arranging toast in a rack.

It was difficult for Polly to understand this ridiculous conduct, and she was always impatient with anything which was not plain

to her. But she was practical now, because a strange idea had occurred to her.

Very kindly she placed her hands on Sarah's shoulders and whispered:—

‘Sarah, you are in love.’

No answer, only a sullen persistence in arranging the toast.

‘And I know who it is’ (there was something pathetic and regretful in that tone).

‘Who?’

That was spoken very fiercely, and the flame on Sarah's face was not pleasant to look at.

‘Why, Michael,’ said Polly, in a kind of mild wonder, which was not at all creditable to the common sense she usually displayed.

‘You're a fool,’ said Sarah very sharply, and she carried the toast into the parlour, leaving Polly more perplexed than ever.

(To be continued.)

My Friends in Ant Hill City.

BY AN UNSCIENTIFIC OBSERVER.

I FIRST became acquainted with Ant Hill City through a tragedy. It was a lovely September morning, and the little suburban back garden in which I stood looked as sweet and fresh as if London smoke were a myth. Jauntily curving himself along the gravelled walk came a young earthworm. He was evidently setting out to seek his fortune in so much of the wide world as might be found in the garden of a small semi-detached metropolitan residence. He had faith in himself and in his future. The early bird which snaps up the early worm when the latter tempts Providence by rising before Providence is out of bed, was conspicuously absent. The quiet sunshine, the crisp clear air, the worm, and the writer, except for a distant perspective of cock-crowing, seemed to have creation to themselves. To the worm, however, there was no such quintuple division. He wriggled on with a slow serenity and self-importance that showed how little he thought of the trifles outside his own life. The hard gravel walk had been warmed by the sun, and the worm, owning a soul above damp clods, enjoyed the warmth with contented obliviousness to everything else. But that jade, Fate, could not suffer so much happiness, even in a conceited morsel of a worm. She directed him where the walk was alive with black specks. Among these the thin pink line lazily but unhesitatingly thrust itself. Poor pink line! It was agony in miniature. As you read this, it may make you smile. But, had you seen the startled bound which lifted with a sudden quiver of pain nearly the whole of the worm off the ground, you had never trodden wittingly on a worm again.

For the next instant all that could be seen was a writhing black line. It lashed hither and thither; it rolled round and round; it tied itself up in dreadful knots. The black specks which hid its whole length increased in numbers. Black specks climbed on the back of other black specks, and both sought out the joints between the scales of the worm, and buried their mandibles in the writhing flesh with diabolical enjoyment. It was the combat between Apollo and the Python again, only there were a million Apollos and but one wretched Python. Then the struggle grew fainter and fainter. Between every volute of the worm's body a knot of ants could be seen breakfasting with relish. In a few more

minutes all was over, and the dainty Beau Brummel who had issued from his earth-chambers ten minutes before, with hope and all the world before him, was being interred in very small pieces in some hundreds of living sepulchres. But it is given to few to so well serve their day and generation as to literally entertain a multitude themselves. The kindly entombment which the ants gave me here of the morning was doubtless an appreciation of his many excellent qualities, and must, when it became known to his friends, have softened their feelings of otherwise irreparable loss.

Some such thought had made me look upon the contest without interfering. With it commenced a friendly regard for my ants which has lasted to this day. In spite of their murders and their tyrannies, I like them. I put up with their thievings as I tolerate the borrowings of the graceless varlet who is perpetually asking me for half-a-crown, and who I know would feel hurt if I suggested repayment of the last he had. I have seen them wage one of the bloodiest and most merciless wars which has ever been waged since Moses moulded the Israelites into a people upon the spear-points of their enemies. But I should as soon think of disliking my ants for this as of questioning the cleverness of the great lawgiver who knew better than I do the best means adapted to his ends. Last, though by no means least, their perseverance harms me. When a man gets flung more heavily than usual in the rough skirmish which is euphemistically called the struggle for existence, he might do worse than go and sit down before my ants and learn a lesson from their tireless and ceaseless activity.

Come with me and peep at Ant Hill City. For all I know to the contrary, it may have existed from time immemorial, like the agpipes in the family of Shon Maclean. Built on the slope of a round which runs down from a raised garden walk, it is shaded on every side, you see, by a forest of palm-like pinks up which the ants occasionally swarm with the agility of monkeys. Leading from it to the plateau of the garden walk is a covered tunnel, or rather pass, I should say, for the rain last night has washed it down. The ants are now hard at work repairing it. Atom by atom they are piling up on the bare ground two thin walls of earth, a quarter of an inch high and about an eighth thick. These, from the edge of the garden walk to the mouth of the ant-hill, will be nearly three inches long. Examined by a hand magnifier, each of the tiny black masons can be seen carrying in his mandibles a fragment of earth which he builds into the wall. This laid, he trots rapidly off for another. Here three or four labourers are toiling along with a mite of stone which is too heavy for one to carry. In the course of a few hours the tunnel begins to present the appearance of a long dry aqueduct,

down which a narrow stream of workers is constantly flowing. All night the same restless energy will be displayed, until by morning the tunnel is securely arched in with a roof of earth. The covered way thus provided through the forest of pinks which intervenes between the garden walk and Ant Hill City, is never by my ants suffered to fall into disrepair. Whether it protects them from the dangers which may lurk in the forest, or whether it was designed for the purpose of guiding convivial ants safely home after they had been spending the night with their friends, are moot points with me. Anyway the tunnel remains, and if a storm should destroy it, a day and a night always sees it rebuilt.

Soon after my first introduction to Ant Hill City I found out that my ants, like Nimrod, were mighty hunters before the Lord. Noticing the walk alive one night with a perpetual twinkle of delicate gem-like gleams, I stooped down and discovered fourteen tired trappers lugging manfully home as many dead flies and other small deer. These, for want of arms, they carried in their mandibles, and thus possibly took a foretaste of the feast they were to enjoy when they got home. The opalescent iridescence from the wings of one of such unfortunates could be seen for some distance along the tunnel. A tiny spark of living purple and green, it lit the dark walls of the covered way like a fairy lamp, until the ant, having reached the central gateway to the ant hill, turned off sharply right or left to his own abode. The favourite hunting ground in which these captures took place was a vast tract of grassy brushwood known to mortals as weeds. Beyond the brushwood stretched rich prairie land of illimitable extent. No living ant had ever crossed it, but, so differently do things appear when looked at from another elevation, it was only a ragged lawn for all that.

In this brushwood and on the nearer side of the lawn the ants used to stalk their prey, going out for that purpose in small festive bands of three and four. They always returned home alone, however, but thought nothing of waiting out hours for the sake of making a good capture. The most persevering trapper in Ant Hill City was a monstrous fellow, one Hairy Back, and I fear me a tyrant. He was head and shoulders longer than most of his compatriots, and had the temper of a devil. And here I may digress a moment to relate an anecdote about the rages into which he sometimes worked himself. Once, while labouring at the incessant repairs of the tunnel, a little under-sized ant vexed him. To stop work and seize the offender by one of his hindmost legs was the work of a moment. Then Hairy Back began to crawl slowly up the tunnel which had been unroofed by the weather, dragging his miserable victim with him. With a politeness for which few

would give ants credit, no one annoyed Hairy Back by asking him what he was doing, though had he been a little smaller this might not have been the case. In vain the prisoner clutched at stones and grasses in the endeavour to arrest his involuntary progress. Inch by inch of walk was passed. The brushwood thicket came in view. Into its dim and gloomy depths Hairy Back remorselessly pulled his wretched mite of an enemy. When I found out where Hairy Back had got to, he was standing complacently looking at the heap of fragments into which he had reduced his victim during the somewhat *mauvais quart d'heure* which that victim must have passed. Having seen that the bits did not manifest any inclination to become an ant again, Hairy Back turned on his several heels and made his way back to work with the calm dignity of an ant who in doing his duty to a neighbour had conferred benefit on the state. It might have been fancy, but Hairy Back that afternoon appeared to be so respectfully treated that none obtruded themselves within half an inch of his nobility. Rash philosophers might point to this as an instance of antish hero-worship. Perhaps, however, other feelings had a little to do with the behaviour of the multitude.

Hairy Back shone most, however, on the trail. He would follow a fly with the deadly intent which knows no fatigue and counts no cost. One twilight I noticed him moodily making, with his usual solitary surliness, for the thicket of weeds on the far side of the walk. Game was scarce, for in half an hour he had beaten through it and advanced some little distance upon the prairie of the lawn. Turning to give one last look behind him, however, before attacking the unknown dangers of the unknown world before him, he saw what I had been watching for some time. This was a delicate gossamer-winged summer night-fly, who had had some appointment in that neighbourhood for moon-rising time, and was a little too early for it. It did not need half a glance at Hairy Back to see that he meant to signify his Diogenean hatred for beauty and satisfy appetite at the same time. Stealthily the little demon turned him round again and began to crawl towards Gossamer Wings, who, all unconscious of his danger, was dreamily looking out across the forest of pinks and on to a great crimson sunset flaming, a very rose of evening, down in the west. The paradise Gossamer Wings saw in that wonderful flower may have been commonplace or it may have been celestial. Whichever it was, it did not apparently matter. Hairy Back was close behind him, and—

Gossamer Wings moved. A faint motion from almost invisible pinions, and he floated up into the rich red light which filled the heavens with a ruby glow. Perhaps the gentle deity who

directs the course of true love among men, and guards the meetings of happy lovers, had Gossamer Wings' heart also in her keeping. For up there, untold insect miles above Hairy Back gnashing his teeth in the damp thicket below them, Gossamer Wings was joined by Gossamer Wings, and the twain floated to and fro in the warm rosy air with the whole atmosphere for a nuptial chamber. But blessings, whatever shape they may possess when they start, reach the earth only in bits. The happiness of one minute is the sugar which is to make us swallow the misery of the next with as few wry faces as possible. The twilight died down, and the early night deepened to darkness. What had happened I know not, but across the gravel walk a hulking ant made toilsome progress homeward, and locked in his strong mandibles were two delicate gossamer-winged summer night-flies.

The best time to see the inhabitants of Ant Hill City at their busiest, was night. And it has always struck me that the young gentleman primarily upbraided in the second person, and then called a sluggard, had good reason not to obey the command to go to the ant and consider her ways. Had he put himself to the trouble of going, he must first have wasted his substance in buying a candle, and then have sat up all the night only to find Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Ant coming to the conclusion that they would not go home till morning, or at any rate till daylight did appear: an example which might have made the sluggard's last state much worse than his first. But the ant at night is a study, for all that. His restless activity, that of perpetual motion turned centipede, is redoubled. Be the dew never so heavy, Signor Ant will take the air, and trot about in his apparently aimless way. A dog hunting for its master in a fair, and a pigeon flying in circles, have a *raison d'être* for their actions. Perhaps an ant has too. But nothing short of a perpetual alarm of fire, coupled with the eternal loss of his purse, could fairly explain the reason of the ant's infinite flurry and hasty travelling.

Generally—I am only speaking of the ants in a certain small suburban back garden—as soon as night fell, Ant Hill City commenced to disgorge its population. A thick black stream of ants would come out of the mouth of the tunnel and spread themselves across the walk in a moving floor-cloth of shining particles. Byles in 'Miriam's Crime,' a somewhat drunken and humorous auctioneer's clerk, taking an inventory of a room with the assistance of a by no means clear brain, speaks of something which he calls 'a revolving carpet.' But a multitude of ants engaged in ascertaining what kind of a night it is, make the space they cover look like revolving carpets innumerable. When most of the citizens

have left the City, a drove of flat milk-white creatures are driven out of the tunnel, and make a sudden trickle and splash as of milk in the midst of the dark mass of ants. These are Farmer Ant's cows, and he is as particular in giving them exercise as he is careful to take it himself. Shaped like a miniature wood-louse, and as white as a flake of snow, these kine are readily distinguished from their owners. They seem free to come and go, but never stray far from the entrance to the ant hill, in and out of which they pop with comical jack-in-the-box effect.

Ant Hill City has already been described as erected on sloping ground, which fell gently down from the higher level of the garden walk. After a few more inches of declination it began to rise on the opposite side again. The ant hill was therefore built on one of the sides of a long valley, a circumstance which led to a catastrophe. Certain alterations were being made in the garden, and had to be suspended one day on account of a continued series of thunder-storms, almost tropical in their violence. The garden in any case would have been flooded with storm-water, but in this instance, at the upper end of the trench in which Ant Hill City stood, the earth had been so left that it formed a natural reservoir at the head of the valley. The storms continued to rage until the loose barrier of earth gave way, and with a dull roar a miniature flood tore down the trench. From the window I could see the waters boil round the tunnel, and then, with a mighty rush, they swept forward. Ant Hill City, like the buried Dutch towns under the Zuyder Zee, lay 'fathoms deep below.' During the rest of the day and night the rain fell without intermission, but next morning the wind and the sun racing together as to which should do the most work, speedily dried the ground between them. I approached the spot where Ant Hill City stood with a faint reflection of the feeling that perhaps an ancient idler may have had, when, after visiting Pompeii before its disappearance, he returned to stand above its site and wonder what untold tragedies were buried under his feet.

But I might have spared myself the trouble of thinking that a mere inundation would or could take an ant at a disadvantage. The tunnel, it was true, had gone, and the pinks were no more. The valley-side was as bare as a boulder. But up and down the round black hole, which was the principal entrance to Ant Hill City, swarmed a multitude of its inhabitants. It was evident something unusual had happened, for they had the appearance of navvies who had been working all night in a bog. Their thighs and legs were as muddy as a scavenger's, and their ordinarily neat jackets were dirty to a degree. Spite of their dirt, they were appa-

rently engaged in momentous business, for the garden walk was covered with them in full parliament assembled. They had evidently settled that Ant Hill City must be given up, for exploring parties were rambling all over the immediate vicinity of their ruined abode. During the whole of the morning and afternoon a scene of considerable animation ensued. The long stretch of grassy brushwood which has already been mentioned was surveyed from end to end, and at last the greater portion of the ants focussed themselves in a dense black mass about the size of a cheese plate at the bottom of a magnificent tuft of common grass, which, compared with its brethren, was as one of the cedars of Lebanon.

Towards five o'clock, definite orders to form a colony on this spot were apparently given, and a long black line of ants began to travel backwards and forwards from the old city to their new location, which was situated on the other side of the garden walk, and exactly opposite the parent nest. The ants had made up their minds not to spend another single night in a place which would not be thoroughly habitable unless they could all be taught swimming; and the evening promised all it could for a flitting. An intensely hot day had dried everything, and the world was as warm as a toast. It was a Sunday evening, it is true; but so far as a lengthened observation of ant life goes, it must be confessed that the only commandment laid upon them appears to be an injunction to reverse the whole of the ten enjoined on us. This they obey with some success, though perhaps much superior creatures would not find the same thing difficult. Preparations for moving were immediately commenced, and the first ant swarmed up out of the entrance to Ant Hill City, with his bundle in his mouth, and set off across the garden walk to Mound Colony, as it was afterwards called, just as the first church bells began to ring. It was a stirring exodus. From Mound Colony to Ant Hill City stretched a moving black ribbon of insect life, multitudinous, curiously intelligent or instinct-taught, all engaged in one work, and all doing it sensibly and well. The church bells and the ants suggested puzzling questions, as the muscular little bearers trotted along with all kinds of fragments in their jaws. Some of the ants had nothing to carry. Naked they had come into the world, and naked they remained in it. But even these forlorn hit on an excellent plan for protecting their *amour propre*. They marched contentedly by the side of richer brethren. If they had not goods and chattels to convey, they could convey themselves, and this done some few score times might take the sting out of poverty.

But among the minor incidents of the great emigration, none were so amusing as the visit paid by a beetle to Ant Hill City

in the very middle and pressure of the work of the evening. The last touches of sunlight were flooding the long reach of Ant Hill Valley with light, and the indescribable peace of a Sabbath evening muffled and hung about everything, as if the world were being wrapped in invisible wool before Time put it into bed and tucked it about with darkness. Dressed in the glossiest of black clothes, Scarabæus came ambling leisurely down the garden walk. He had been dining with some friends in a shady corner near my house, and was in the best of humours with himself, and so much as he knew of the ordering of present events. His fat contentment bespoke social standing of high beetle kind. From the measured gravity of his walk I judged that he was the churchwarden of his own beetle parish, and perchance a beetle alderman, or mayhap a beetle Lord Mayor. The sunlight in the valley and its reflection on the clumps of grassy brushwood excited no more attention from him than so much dirt. He waddled along with his little fat head stuck vacantly forward, and his little fat belly all but dragging on the ground, a far more important universe than the outer one on which he condescended to walk. But Fate was watching for him as she had watched for the earthworm. Early in the day she had laid a long straw obliquely across the path, with one end close to the entrance of Ant Hill City. Any one, therefore, too idle to step over the straw, and travelling along to where it ended, would pop down the shaft which communicated with the interior of the ant hill.

But Scarabæus did not know this, though Scarabæus was too idle to cross the straw. 'It was only a little farther round,' reflected Scarabæus, and 'a respectable beetle cannot be expected to climb straws at this time of day.' He walked on down the side of the straw. Directly in front of him was the gaping aperture which led to Ant Hill City. Down this he slipped with a swiftness which would not have shamed Icarus when his wings turned out to be better suited to a cold than to a hot climate. With Scarabæus's unwieldy bulk were of course swept down a dozen ants who had been just on the point of emerging, and who might have been forgiven for the moment in thinking that solid rain of this kind was a trifle too much of a joke. In two seconds a most ludicrous sight presented itself. First of all above the hole were violently waved a couple of antennæ working like very inebriated semaphores. Behind them came the tips of Mr. Beetle's hands and nose. With wild frenzy he tore at the edges of the deceitful pit only to drop out of sight as they gave way. Meantime, the whole hill was in a state of the wildest excitement. Three ants had got out of the hole and scoured off to Mound Colony on the other side of the

walk to spread the alarm. Again with redoubled frenzy came the semaphores and the appealing nose and hands. Then, with a convulsive jerk which flung out of the pit two of the ants who had been attacking him in a region that a soldier is never supposed to allow the enemy to wound, Scarabæus pulled himself into daylight. But the glossy dignity was gone. Behind him trailed a pack of foes. With an unwieldy scuttle he breasted the valley-side to gain the walk. As spasmodically as a furniture van running a race, he puffed and waddled along. Once on the high ground he took heart of grace, got up a respectable though wobbling gallop, and disappeared in a dire fright behind the potsherd where he lived, a sadder but we may hope a wiser beetle.

The episode of the beetle did not last long enough to hinder the Great Exodus. The swarm of ants marching across the walk between the old home and the new one, continued their energetic preparations to make the fitting and expeditious one. So expeditious, indeed, were their movements, that for some time I thought the ants might not have paid their rent, and while the landlord was asleep had quietly taken the opportunity of removing their goods. But this I am sure wronged their characters. In the tuft of grass the ant-masons had now for a good hour been at work. Between the thickly clustering stems they adroitly dropped small lumps of mould which the intertwining stalks prevented slipping quite to the ground. This formed a more or less even roof of earth at a height of nearly half an inch from the floor, and was completed in about twelve hours. In Ant Hill City the ants had lived in a dark underground residence. Mound Colony consisted of a spacious ground-floor chamber, pillared on grass stalks and completely roofed in with earth. *En passant*, I may perhaps draw Dr. Richardson's attention to this, as it is the first application that I have seen of his roof-garden theory. The grass stalks supporting the ceiling of the ants' abode grew through it and flowered in mighty palm-like fronds at—to the ants—an immense distance above it. To this elevated garden the ants in the evening used to occasionally repair, not, however, from any very æsthetic considerations, as they apparently only used it as a hunting ground.

This earthen roof during the following week was considerably extended, and covered, comparatively speaking, a wide area. Being desirous of ascertaining if the ants had burrowed under the ground beneath it, I cleared it away after they had been residing in Mound Colony for some time, a high-handed act for which I hereby tender my most sincere apologies to the parties thus so summarily inconvenienced. The ground was, however, undisturbed;

and as the ants, on the subsidence of their astonishment at the catastrophe, immediately re-roofed themselves in again, it did not appear that they intended to follow the same method of residence as that which they had adopted on the other side of the garden walk.

In a fortnight Mound Colony was finally completed. Towards the fifteenth or sixteenth day, or rather night, for it happened at nine o'clock P.M., an unusual congregation hinted that the last ceremony of the Great Exodus, the removal of the aphides to their new farm-yard, was to take place. Surrounded on every side by phalanxes of ants, the white aphide-specks came slowly up from the subterranean depths of Ant Hill City, and were detained a few moments on the slope of the valley until the entire herd had been collected. Then the multitude started. A short time sufficed to climb the valley-side and reach the plateau of the garden walk. Some of the ants appeared to be more occupied in describing invisible circles than in making a straight track between Ant Hill City and Mound Settlement; but possibly they had sheep-dog duties to perform of which I was not cognisant. To do justice to the aphides, however, nothing appeared to be further from their thoughts than any attempt at escape. They ambled placidly along in the middle of their drivers with supreme indifference as to their destination. The garden walk might have been the beginning of the desert, but it would have been all the same to the ants' kine. They knew by some means that they had to change quarters, and changed quarters accordingly with that insensibility to the future which makes the sleepy walk of fat cattle along a sunny country lane the highest expression of scepticism as to the future.

And my aphides continued their march as though past and future were to them unknown terms. Inch by inch the garden walk lengthened under their slow progress until the broad entrance, nearly an inch wide, of Mound Colony lay right before them. Up to and through this the white specks unhesitatingly passed, and were lost in the pitch darkness of the interior of the settlement. Had they lived in it all their lives, they could not have entered Mound Colony with more alacrity. After them came the main body of the ants in a moving mass which made the eye ache to watch it. That a human being with a powerful lamp was watching them, or that something had played pranks with nature and stuck a curious sun right over their house at a time when all honest suns should be in bed, never apparently troubled them. It was nearly an hour before the Great Exodus was accomplished and Mound Colony assumed its normal appearance. The last stragglers came out of

Ant Hill City and left its erstwhile busy corridors empty. The last wanderers across the garden walk reached the Mound and disappeared within it. The sense of infinite motion which seizes anyone who watches a large body of insects in motion in their natural habitat died suddenly away. The feeling of power and protection suggested to a man by the microscopically small, gave place to a singular feeling of solitariness. A few instants ago I had been on friendly terms with a multitude, and the ground about me was thick with hundreds of acquaintances. Now there was no nearer companionship than that of the stars.

This change of quarters suggested the possibility of introducing another colony of ants near the original settlers. Hearing that a friend had several large and populous ant hills in his garden, I had one removed bodily into mine, but until I received the ants I did not know they were yellow ones. Although apprehensive that my black friends might not agree cordially with their new neighbours, I put the yellow strangers down about five yards from Mound Colony, and as for several days no ill results accrued, I anticipated that my forebodings would turn out to be groundless. The ant hill of the yellow ants which had been thus removed, was made of light sandy *matériel*, while the soil in my garden was ordinary mould. Near the spot where the yellow emigrants were placed several spadefuls of the former were placed. After recovering from their astonishment at a journey compared to which those on the famous square of flying carpet in the 'Arabian Nights' fade into insignificance, the yellow ants surveyed this heap and selected a corner for a new hill. At this they worked most perseveringly, and in the course of a few days I found them straggling off from the place where they were first deposited, with the bale of cotton-like parcels which Nature in a moment of freakishness gave them for eggs. A railway porter burdened with half-a-dozen portman-teaus is a sight to excite a smile, but an ant attempting to remove its eggs can only be compared to a railway porter trying to walk off with a luggage van.

The eggs safely removed, the yellow ants apparently thought that, however inexplicable had been their removal, their troubles for the present were over. They settled down into quiet and contented members of society, and went about doing their various work with much antish perseverance. On their part, too, the black ants went in and out of Mound Colony enjoying that firm faith in the even continuance of all things with which men as well as ants are blessed. So far as I know, and as the sequel proved, *neither the black nor the yellow ants knew of each other's existence.* Between the two I had constructed a kind of North-West

ontier of earth a foot high, designing to remove it when the yellow strangers had become more used to their surroundings. The unfortunate carrying out of this determination led to one of the bloodiest and cruellest massacres known to history. How it happened I would not pretend to more than suggest. What was really the commencement of hostilities may never be recorded. Perhaps the black ants wished Hairy Back to reside with the yellow ants, and in consequence of their refusal to receive an envoy resolved to have the blood of every individual yellow ant in order to wipe out the insult. Or the yellow ants may have stolen some of the aphides of the black ants and thus have provoked a conflict which resulted in tribal ruin and utter destruction. However far these hypotheses may have been true, must be left to the reader's own judgment. I can only chronicle what I saw, the apparently merciless and causeless destruction of, for aught I know, an historic and ancient people among their ant kind.

When I first noticed the fray it could only have just commenced, for round Mound Colony, though in a fearfully excited state, the principal portion of the black ants were still congregated. Far away at the base of the yellow ant hill I noticed a few black ants phenomenally still, for an ant not incessantly moving may be generally looked upon, so far as this life goes, as having been disenchised. Between the citadel of the yellow ants and Mound Colony a few black and yellow ants were apparently enjoying a steadily wrestling match. Anyone watching the athletes, however, could have noticed that, whenever one was thrown, he, like the black ants at the bottom of the yellow ants' hill, made no attempt to move again, and manifested that wonderful indifference to subsequent proceedings which doctors call death. As I watched, the angry movement round the Mound continued. From the Mound and top of the hill in which the yellow ants lived the wrestlers in the plain between the two were, I noticed, constantly receiving fresh accessions of strength. Detachments of black ants were often formed at intervals, and met by opposing detachments of yellow ants ordered out of their ant-hill. Had a general commanded the forces, the fighting could not have been more scientific. The skirmish extended into an engagement, the engagement into a heavy battle, and at last the battle into an assault on the yellow ants' hill itself. As I watched, the supports of the black ants were thrown forward more rapidly, and in greater numbers. Out of the yellow ants' hill deployed heavier columns. The charge and shock of the opposing masses became more fierce, and the litter of the dead more numerous. The tide of battle, surging now to Mound Colony and now to the yellow ants' hill, took narrower

flowings to the former, and more repeatedly neared the latter; for the yellow ants were slowly giving way, and their black assailants were forcing themselves nearer and nearer the ant hill.

Had it been possible to have separated the combatants now, I would have done it. Small as they were, there was a sanguinary ferocity about the black ants which alienated sympathy, while the bravery of the yellow ants, coupled with the fact that they were nearly a third smaller than their foes, compelled something like admiration. To add to the horror of the scene, the butchery was executed in deadeast silence. The visible rush and excitement of the storming parties could be plainly seen. The heat and action of attack and defence were as apparent as if the hill I sat watching had been one of the heights of the Shipka and the combatants Turks and Russians. It was plainer, for no smoke of battle hid slayers and slain. All was done in clear broad genial sunshine, and was as vividly observable as the tortures which are being inflicted on the Elamite prisoners in some of the Assyrian tablets at the British Museum. But as those hapless wretches, pegged down to the ground and slowly skinned alive by the implacable figures standing knife in hand over them, have been voicelessly suffering the most excruciating agony any time these thousand years, so the unfortunate yellow ants were dismembered without the faintest sound reaching me. There may have been cries and screams and the sobbings of unutterable physical anguish. If there were, my senses were too gross to perceive them. I could see limb torn from limb. I could watch the body of some miserable prisoner lengthening under the awful strain, as two bands of its captors tugged it in two. Then it snapped asunder, and its bloodthirsty assailants captured another foe.

Another feature of the fight was its individualised character. Though hundreds of ants were engaged in the massacre, there were no annihilations *en masse*. The slaughter of every separate ant was an Homeric episode. Prodigies of valour were performed by the several champions on either side, among whom Hairy Back was conspicuous, especially towards the close of the eventful day. He had literally fought his way single-handed through serried columns of his enemies, and had heaped together small cairns of dead foes in different parts of the field as a proof of his prowess. Wherever the press of conflict was hottest, there Hairy Back, drawn by some magnetic spell, was certain to find himself; and there his powerful bulk and formidable mandibles invariably inclined victory in favour of the black battalions whom he in part led. When the battle had receded from the garden walk, and was concentrating at the foot of the hill on which stood

the yellow ants' citadel, it was Hairy Back who once more girt up his loins for destruction. Down the steep sides of the hill poured the last of the yellow ants, the consciousness of certain defeat almost distinguishable in their mad charge. It was the advance of the French Cuirassiers at Wörth over again. The few remaining yellow ants who had hitherto stayed the assault had been overpowered when the invaders were met by this new battalion. Once the advancing black line could be broken, all might yet be retrieved.

And, as the yellow wave poured down the hill, it lashed in and out and partially through the broad black mass at the bottom. The Greeks at Marathon did no more prodigies of valour than that last forlorn handful of yellow ants, a regiment flung in the face of an army. The impetus of the onslaught cleared the hill for the moment, and rolled the combatants on to the walk where dead and dying lay thick. Life, home, possessions, hung on the success of that last advance. But the yellow ants were not to be permitted a victorious Balaclava. Slowly but surely the battle circled back again. Slowly but surely numbers began to prevail. Doggedly fighting and as doggedly dying, but doggedly fighting even in their last moments, yellow ant after yellow ant was vanquished. The broad black band lapped over the supports of the small force which had attacked them, and began to assail them in the rear. Then, and not till then, did panic overtake the beaten. But from that moment a wild flight took place, a flight so wild and so pitiable that it would have made a woman weep had she seen it. Bursting through the array of black ants, assailed and killed at the moment of escape, pursued when they did escape, racing distractedly up the garden walk, and stumbling over the bodies of friends and foes, a few score survivors endeavoured to save their lives.

All was in vain. Right beyond Mound Colony the garden walk was alive with patrolling parties of black ants who fastened like tigers on the fugitives. Even the last survivors, a few yellow ants who in the moment of defeat had hastily retreated, rushed into the ant hill, seized their eggs, and descended by the other side, were chased. Hairy Back led the pursuers, and rapidly overhauled them. With characteristic fierceness he precipitated himself into their midst, although his companions in arms were far behind. But it was to be his last encounter. Maddened beyond fear and into frenzied strength, the yellow ants with common consent turned upon their solitary foe. On and about him the last wretched remnant of the yellow ants swarmed with the desperation of those who are doomed and know it. By the time the

rest of the black ants came up the battle was over, and Hairy Back, unshriven and unassoiled, had gone to his own place. But there was now no chance of flight. Disposed round the corpse of the black Goliath, the yellow ants waited the onset of their pursuers. It came. A little stir and struggle, a black ant corpse covered with several yellow ones, and far and wide along the plain of the gravel walk multitudinous black specks were the only things that moved. Fragments of yellow lay scattered between Mound Colony and the conquered ant hill. A ridge of yellow bodies, like a line of fairy corn, lay thick at its base. Up the hill side, too, the yellow uniforms of the defeated could be seen shining by the side of their black-garbed enemies. But the yellow specks were all motionless. The yellow ants had been exterminated.

All that evening the yellow ant hill was given over to sack by the conquerors. A transport train of black ants moved to and fro between Mound Colony and the citadel of the yellow ants, carrying a wonderful loot of eggs. Mound Colony was too small to contain the spoil, and a second train was established between Mound Colony and the deserted Ant Hill City, the latter of which was turned into a vast plunder warehouse. Night came softly down on the busy workers, as gently and as softly as though rapine and bloodshed had never been known in this pleasant world. Cheerful windows were lighted up. Evening lamps shone through crimson blinds with smiles of coy invitation and welcome. The song of a canary mellowed by a few yards of distance filled the air. From an upstairs window floated down to me and up to the rising moon the laughing good night of children. I turned and went indoors. The mystery of Nature was too perplexing.

ARCHIBALD M'NEILL.

Something like a Shareholder.

A FRAGMENT IN ASTERISKS.

THAT H. M. had accepted it was certain. Nor was there any reason why she should not have done so. When people have the misfortune to suffer capital punishment, or to be declared felons, their goods are confiscated and become Her property. And again, when anyone dies intestate, and without relations, his goods revert to Her. The case in question fell under the usual head, and the goods were not very valuable. They represented, indeed, only two days of H. M.'s income, namely, 2,000*l.*; and they were placed to her credit in the Southwark and Hammersmith Bank (unlimited) as a matter of course. Unhappily, they were Bank shares. When the crash came, there was a deficiency of 40,000,000*l.* to be made up by four hundred shareholders; a trifle of 100,000*l.* apiece only—if they could but have paid it. Three hundred and ninety-nine of them, however, were butchers, bakers, and candlestick-makers; the four hundredth was—H. M., and all the creditors naturally looked to Her for their money. Her legal advisers were consulted on the matter in vain; they couldn't see any way out of it at all, except through the Court. 'Then that will be easy,' said H. M. 'Alas, Madame, no,' said they; 'we mean the Bankruptcy Court.'

The P***** of W**** behaved admirably; his expectations, of course, had been considerable: he had had a large allowance, and had been accustomed to his little comforts, but his choice was taken at once. Below his knee was a splendid garter, with diamonds upon it, and the legend, 'Evil be to him that evil thinks'; he took it off, because he knew that it must be disposed of.

'Henceforth,' he said, 'instead of that motto I take another no less honourable—"Poverty before dishonour."'

Mr. Attenborough offered 400*l.* for the trinket. One hundred thousandth part of the debt was thus already provided for. All the other P*****s followed this noble example, but their Orders were not so promptly attended to, or, at least, not so much money was paid for them. The insignia of the Garter had become a drug in the market.

H. M. caused all her real property to be valued by a council of estate agents—and also her ideal. It was estimated that, at 5*s.* apiece, she could make 10,000*l.* in six weeks by selling her autograph

supposing (which was very doubtful) that that fancy price could be maintained in face of such a supply. The contents of the Privy Purse were counted, and all expenditure reduced to a minimum. The horses and carriages were disposed of, and when locomotion was desired, if at Windsor, a fly was called to the Castle gate; if at Buckingham Palace, a cab from the stand at the corner. The 'Herb and the Spring' supplied the royal table, and after dinner, in place of café noir, there was chicory. The P***** of W***** only smoked cigars when they were given him.

Sublime but vain economies! By all these means only one fifty thousandth part of H. M.'s liability was discharged.

The auctioneer, with that hammer more fatal than Thor's of old, repaired to B*****'s C*****e, with instructions to sell without reserve; but the neighbours, with the sagacity of their race, had perceived the coming necessity, and, declining to bid against one another, got everything dirt cheap, and divided afterwards, as per agreement. At O*****e things went better, but the proceeds were, after all, a mere drop in the ocean, and only just sufficed to pay the current interest of the gigantic debt.

K*****'s P***** was sold to a builder for the price of the materials; St. J*****'s P***** nobody would buy at any price; and just as the bargain for B*****'s P***** was about to be concluded (with Baron Grant) it was discovered that the title was doubtful. It did not belong, it was said, to H. M. — at all, but to the nation.

The great struggle, however, which was continued in the law courts for years, and vastly increased H. M.'s obligations, was over W*****'s C*****e, in which the creditors insisted upon taking up their quarters, even if they couldn't sell it. The astute and enterprising Ikey Moses (of the firm of Ahasuerus & Moses) actually seized on the Round Tower, and lived there with his wife and family till dislodged by the military and naval knights assisted by the local fire brigade (the Military and Police having long ago been disbanded for economical reasons). Ikey used to boast that he had four dozen silk pocket-handkerchiefs, which he had cut off the Royal Standard with his own hand.

But the most appalling circumstance attendant upon this noble struggle of a Royal House happened in connection with the P***** of W*****. Actuated by the highest impulses, but unacquainted with constitutional law, he endeavoured to dispose of the C*****'s Jewels. He took the Crown and Sceptre—not the

hotel of that name, of course—though he would have done *that* rather than leave a stone unturned in the way of making what may indeed be termed an honest penny—to his uncle's (by courtesy), and offered them for what they would fetch. The suspicions of the assistant, who was a sharp young man, were excited by the Sceptre. 'This is an unusual piece of plate,' he said to himself, and contrived to hold the P***** in conversation while he sent for the police. Then, of course, the question arose, Did the jewels belong to H. M. or to the country? And also, Would the Lord Chief Justice have, for the second time in English history, to commit the Heir Apparent to prison? The whole subject is too painful to be dwelt upon, though in the end, as Sir Alexander observed with as much emotion as originality, the P***** 'left the court without a stain upon his character.'

After every sacrifice had been made by the royal family, there still remained owing to the creditors of the Southwark and Hammersmith Bank, 30,000,000*l.* 2*s.* 9½*d.*, with absolutely no assets to meet it. Then the P***** of W****s, in the most generous and manly manner, determined to relieve H. M. from her pecuniary embarrassment by cutting off the entail. Repeating to himself (in order to keep up his resolution) his self-chosen motto, 'Poverty before Dishonour,' he went on foot to Peterborough Court, and offered the reversion of the Monarchy to the only man who had the money to buy it, and who had also been recommended to him by the Earl of B*****.

'This is really quite unexpected,' said the proprietor of the *D. T.* (who, indeed, had never looked for more than a Baronetcy), 'and, moreover, what you ask is more than half my income.' However, he wrote out a cheque for the 30,000,000*l.* 2*s.*, and was about to add the 9½*d.*—when in a right royal and terrible voice the P***** exclaimed, 'Confound the coppers, sir!'—and I awoke in a profuse perspiration.

The fact is that, after an ample supper (provided on New Year's Day by the kindness of my publishers), I had chanced to observe the following intelligence in a country newspaper: 'It is a curious fact that Her Majesty the Queen was very nearly becoming one of the sufferers in the catastrophe of the Glasgow Bank. A gentleman dying intestate and without relatives, his property of 2,000*l.*, all invested in the bank, would have reverted to the Crown, but that it was judged beneath the dignity of Her Majesty to be a shareholder in any mercantile concern; so the dangerous gift was not accepted.'

Having gone to sleep immediately after perusing the state of things which I have described seemed in my dream to have actually come to pass. And as a contribution to the philosophy of Sleep, I have thought the matter sufficiently interesting—from a scientific point of view—to be here recorded.

Edinburgh Society Seventy Years Ago.

no period of her history did the city of Edinburgh better deserve her complimentary title of the 'Modern Athens,' than during the last ten years of the 18th and the first ten years of the 19th century. She was then, not only nominally, but actually the capital of Scotland; the city in which was concentrated all the intellectual life and vigour of the country. London then occupied a position of much less importance in relation to the more distant parts of the Empire than is now the case. Many causes have contributed to bring about the change, of which the most prominent is the increased facilities for locomotion which have since been introduced. The time occupied in making a journey of any considerable length prior to the invention of railways was so long, and the expense and other inconveniences were so great, that persons living in remote parts of the country rarely attempted so serious an undertaking as an expedition to London without very pressing necessity. The following is a description of the vehicles in which persons travelled to Edinburgh in 1797—'Do not form your ideas of chaises in Scotland and the North of England from what you see in the South. The chance is of not getting them at all, or getting them in so wretched a state that it is not only discreditable and inconvenient, but positively unsafe to ride in them. We are put into chaises with half a bottom, with no glasses to the windows or fastenings to the door; and we not unfrequently might have been taken for a party of convicted Scotchmen on our road to Newgate.'

The consequence of this state of things was that the position of their own neighbourhood of many of the larger provincial towns was very much more influential than it is at the present day. A journey to the metropolis from any part of the country is now undertaken on a very slight pretext, and, even when a journey in person is not requisite, articles of dress or food are obtained from the place whence they would formerly have come from the nearest large town. The country clergyman and the country squire now have the fish and dessert for their dinner-parties sent down from London; and London houses furnish the silk dresses for the ladies and the winter clothing for the children. It is almost the exception for members of the middle and upper classes living in the country not to run up to London for a few days or a few

weeks every year to enjoy the change of society and the pleasure of the town. But in the year 1800 it was only the wealthy few who could afford either the time or the expense of an annual visit to London. So the squires, if they went from home at all, contented themselves with taking their families to Bristol, or Exeter, or Norwich, or York, during the Assize week or the race meeting. In her memoir of her father Sydney Smith, Lady Holland says—
 ‘As our opportunities for society were few, my father occasionally took lodgings for us during the Assizes at York; which enabled us to see a great deal of the principal lawyers on the Northern Circuit.’

In many respects, therefore, the large provincial towns were regarded in their own neighbourhoods in the light in which London is now regarded throughout the whole country. Various causes which contributed to increase the importance of other provincial towns were combined in the case of Edinburgh. She was the titular capital of Scotland, and, as such, was looked up to with pride and veneration by the nation at large. Her situation was picturesque, and many of her streets and public buildings were interesting from their antiquity, their beauty, and the historical events with which they were associated. She was in direct communication, both by land and sea, with London and many other large towns. She was the residence of many of the old Scotch nobility and landed gentry, and the exclusion of the British from the Continent during a long-protracted period of warfare made her, either for society, business, or education, a favourite resort for strangers. She was the headquarters of the legal profession of the country at a time when both the Scotch bench and the Scotch bar were rendered illustrious by a number of men celebrated for their learning, their eloquence, and their wit. She was the headquarters of the Scotch Church whose pulpits and General Assembly were adorned by divines of great eminence and piety. Lastly, she was the chief seat of scholarship and the chosen home of literature and science north of the Tweed; and her schools and colleges were filled with students drawn, not only from all parts of Scotland, but also from England and Ireland, and even from the Continent. Edinburgh owed her widespread academic reputation to a constellation of great men, whose indefatigable industry in acquiring, and exquisite skill in imparting, knowledge has rarely been equalled. Many of their names are still familiar to us, and are regarded with reverence as those of men who achieved triumphs in literature or science, and whose writings still delight and instruct their posterity.

The High School was presided over by Dr. Adam, the Rector,

assisted by Luke Fraser and Willie Nicol, the friend of Burns, for whose edification 'Willie brewed a peck o' maut.' Unfortunately, Willie was only too fond of brewing a peck o' maut, and is reported to have had an incorrigible partiality for the bottle.

Dr. Adam was a man of great learning and skill in teaching. He had raised himself to his high position by his own exertions and industry, in spite of innumerable obstacles. Lord Brougham says, 'The hardships he endured from poverty in his early life have seldom been equalled, never exceeded. When he was endeavouring to educate himself, he, for some years, suffered from actual hunger, his only means of subsistence being the small sum of three guineas a quarter received from teaching, out of which he had to pay fourpence a week for a miserable lodging two miles out of town, and his daily food was oatmeal porridge and penny rolls. He dispensed with fire and candles: the former, by severe exercise when the weather permitted—when it was bad, by climbing one of the highest staircases in which Edinburgh abounds: the latter by reading at the rooms of some fellow student.' Adam was a consummate schoolmaster, and took a genuine interest in the success of his scholars in after life. He is said to have remembered the fate of every boy at his school during the fifty years he had superintended it, and always to have traced their success or failure in after life to their industry or negligence while under his care. He had the faculty of making himself greatly beloved and respected by his pupils, and many of the most eminent of them spoke of him with gratitude and esteem. If the story of his death-bed scene may be believed, he might have furnished Pope with a remarkable instance of the 'ruling passion strong in death.' He was struck with palsy while teaching his class, and, becoming delirious, conceived he was still in school; and after some expressions of applause or censure, he said—'But it grows dark—the boys may dismiss'—and instantly expired.

The University was under the rule of Dr. Baird, and the most eminent among the professors were Playfair, Professor of Mathematics; Dugald Stewart, of Moral Philosophy; Black, of Chemistry; Dalzell, of Greek; and Finlayson, of Logic. The students to whose education they devoted themselves were well worthy of all the skill and care bestowed upon them. Among their number were many who afterwards attained to honour and fame. The University curriculum extended over four years, and these were generally well spent in steady useful work. There were at that time no examinations and no degrees granted except in medicine, consequently a student's reputation for scholarship was built up rather upon his fellows' personal knowledge of his

industry and general ability than upon actual tests undergone. Many of the students were very poor, and only just managed to maintain themselves by the closest economy, and sometimes, as in the case of Dr. Adam, by the endurance of severe privations. But the love of learning was strong; and youth, health, and ambition carried them through. At that time too in Edinburgh it was thought no disgrace to be poor. No man of sense, ability, and agreeable manners was excluded from society on account of his poverty.

Some of the poorer students seem at one time to have resorted to an ingenious scheme for effecting a slight reduction in the fees for the course of chemical lectures without going through the formality of consulting the professors upon the subject. Brougham gives the following account of his first interview with Professor Black. 'I remember the first time I ever was in his society, when I went to take a ticket for his class, there stood upon his table a small brass instrument for weighing the guineas given. On learning who I was, he entered into conversation in a most kind manner. He asked what classes I had attended, and expressed himself much pleased with what I told him of the great interest I took in mathematics and natural philosophy, recommending the study of Newton's Optics, both for the substance and the method. When I was going away he said—"You must have been surprised at my using this instrument to weigh your guineas, but it was before I knew who you were. I am obliged to weigh them when strange students come in, there being a very large number who bring light guineas; so that if I did not act in self-defence against that class of students I should be defrauded of many pounds every year."'

The lives of the rising generation in Edinburgh were not, however, unremittingly devoted to study. The wise old saw which tells that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, was believed in, and there was plenty of amusement, intellectual and otherwise, to vary the daily routine. After the completion of the day's work, the evenings were passed in social intercourse. One of the most popular forms of relaxation was the exercise of composition and public speaking, for which the numerous literary and debating societies afforded every facility. Foremost in importance among these was the 'Speculative Society,' founded in 1764, in whose books about this time we find the names of Scott, Horner, Moncrieff, Miller, Loch, Adam, Cockburn, Jardine, Thomson, Allen, Jeffrey, Murray, Lord Henry Petty (afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne), Kinnaid, Lord Webb Seymour, Brougham, the two Grants (Lord Glenelg and Sir Robert Grant), and many others

who afterwards became celebrated. The freedom of thought and language which not unfrequently distinguished the debates of the speculative were the source of many disagreements between the students and professors, the latter accusing the former of advocating French principles, *i.e.* the doctrines of the French Revolutionists. On one occasion, Brougham, Horner, and Kinnaird were summoned before the Principal to receive a reprimand for some opinions of this nature maintained in the course of debate. However, only Brougham obeyed the summons, the others being either ill or absent, and the reproof was very gently administered. In 1792 Scott was secretary and librarian of the 'Speculative,' and Jeffrey remarks that the first night he (Jeffrey) ever spent there, he was much struck with the singular appearance of the secretary, who sat gravely at the bottom of the table in a huge woollen nightcap, and, when the president took the chair, pleaded a bad toothache as his apology for coming into that worshipful assembly in such a 'portentous machine.' Another Society was the 'Juvenile Literary Society,' which numbered among its members, Brougham, Horner, John Forbes (Lord Medwin), Henry Mackenzie (Lord Mackenzie), James Keay, Andrew Wauchope, and Andrew Thomson. There were also 'The Academical;' 'The Royal Medical,' whose debates, as its name indicates, principally turned upon subjects connected with the science of medicine; and the 'Academy of Physics,' whose professed object was 'the investigation of nature, the laws by which her phenomena are regulated, and the history of opinion concerning those laws.' This society was founded by Brougham, who, however, declined the proffered honour of being the first president. This important functionary's duties were very minutely and accurately defined: 'To keep order, as he pleases, without limiting the freedom of discussion; to ask all the members present their opinion, and not to allow a few to engross the conversation; to keep the speakers from wandering from the subject; to direct attention at intervals of silence to what he thinks the most interesting points of the question under discussion; to declare at the end of the meeting on which side he conceives the opinion of the majority to be; and, upon his election to the office, to make himself master immediately of the laws, customs, and history of the Academy.' This Society soon came to an untimely end, and Lord Campbell hints in his 'Life of Brougham' that its decease is to be attributed to the fact that the founder engrossed the whole conversation to himself, that no interval of silence was ever known to occur, that the president, finding his authority set at nought, abruptly left the chair, and that no one would agree to be his successor.

Next to the literary societies, the most popular form of amusement was the theatre. The modern Athenians were very severe critics, and had no scruples about damning a play which failed to come up to their standard of excellence. Thus, on the production of a new and very foolish play by a certain Robert Herron, after four very dull and very absurd acts, the fifth opened with a drinking scene, in which one of the actors, addressing his companions, asked, 'Well, gentlemen, what toast shall we drink?' The reply came from the middle of the pit, where a long, lanky youth, rising up and putting on his hat called out, 'We'll drink good afternoon!' and instantly made for the door, his example being followed by the rest of the audience. The youth in question was Henry Brougham, and Herron's play never appeared on the Edinburgh boards again.

The amusements of the students and their friends were not all, however, of such an intellectual character as the debating societies and the drama. There were numerous clubs of a nature simply convivial, such, for instance, as the 'Ante Manum,'—so called because the bill was always supposed to be paid beforehand; the 'Tweeddale,' the 'Apollo,' 'The Club,' and many others; and it was the custom, after the debate or the play was finished, to adjourn either to one of these, or to some well-known tavern or oyster rooms, for supper, which has always been a favourite Edinburgh meal. It was said that Edinburgh was the only place where people dined twice every day. The supper and the subsequent carouse were frequently prolonged till far into the morning hours. Those were the days of hard drinking, when it was thought no disgrace for a gentleman to take more liquor than was by any means good for him. In fact, not only was it no disgrace, but many even of the younger generation prided themselves upon the number of bottles of port or glasses of punch they could carry. Several of the older generation of Scotch judges, who were still on the bench in the last years of the century, thought it a positive merit for a man to get drunk. Of this class was Lord Hermand, of whom it is related that, when a man who had accidentally stabbed a boon companion, with whom he had been drinking, was sentenced to only a very short term of imprisonment, the learned judge protested vehemently against the leniency of the sentence decreed by his brethren. 'We are told,' he said, 'that there was no malice, and that the prisoner must have been in liquor. In liquor! why, he was drunk! And yet he murdered the very man who had been drinking with him! They had been carousing the whole night, and yet he stabbed him; after drinking a whole bottle of rum with him! Good God! my lords, if he will

do this when he's drunk, what will he not do when he's sober? In some letters written in 1799 by Brougham, then just twenty-one, to his relative Mr.—afterwards Lord—Robertson, a man of eminence, and of a sober, respectable character, we find such passages as the following:—‘At night we are uniformly and universally *dead* (drunk). Your humble servant being in the chair (*ex officio*) does his best, and having a good capacity for wine does odd things enough. Yesterday our mess fell off, Campbell and I and two natives set in to it, and among four had twelve port bottles; the natives and Bob being stowed away, I finished another bottle and a half of port with an old exciseman, major of volunteers.’ In another letter he says, ‘The only part of our adventures I look back on with regret is the bottle department, and over this scene I shall decline leading you; because I draw a curtain over it, and you’d run a great risk of cutting yourself in the dark among the fragments of innumerable dozens of empty bottles.’ The custom of drinking toasts then universally prevailed to such a degree that it was considered a great piece of ill-breeding for anyone in a company to drink a glass of wine without dedicating it to the health of some person either present or absent. But still worse were the ‘sentiments.’ The glasses being filled, each person in turn, lady or gentleman, was asked to give a sentiment. The following are specimens of some of those more commonly given, though many persons had a happy knack of inventing new sentiments appropriate to the occasion:—‘May the pleasures of the evening bear the reflections of the morning.’ ‘May the friends of our youth be the companions of our old age.’ ‘May the hand of charity wipe the tear from the eye of sorrow.’ ‘Delicate pleasures to susceptible minds.’ ‘May never worse be among us.’ It may easily be believed that, when such was the general indulgence accorded to habits of hard drinking, many of the tavern orgies did not end in a very orderly fashion; and accordingly we hear of escapades which hardly harmonise with our notions of the staid and dignified demeanour befitting future Edinburgh Reviewers, church dignitaries, judges, and Lord Chancellors. The most popular recreation appears to have been wrenching off door-knockers and bell-handles. In his Memoirs, written after he had passed his eightieth year, Lord Brougham narrates with glee his feats in this peculiar branch of science. He says there appears to have been some mysterious fascination about it, and that he was so great an adept at it that, on his quitting Edinburgh for London, he had a large cupboard in his father’s house, of which he kept the key, full of his trophies. This theory of a mysterious fascination really seems to be the only explanation of the matter, for on

one occasion we find even the grave and sedate Horner himself taking part in one of these unhallowed expeditions. A party, of whom Brougham and Horner were members, sallied forth one evening after dinner, and, stopping in front of a druggist's shop, Brougham was hoisted upon the shoulders of one of his companions, and, with much difficulty, twisted off an enormous brazen serpent, which served to indicate the nature of the business carried on within. On this occasion they had a narrow escape from the clutches of the City Guard. Again we find Jeffrey, Cockburn, Moncrieff, Cuninghame, and Brougham twisting off knockers and smashing lamps. Brougham was suddenly missed, and his disappearance was explained by the untimely arrival of the guardians of the peace, whom he had set upon the track of his companions. They all took to their heels and escaped, except one, and he too was released on payment of a bribe of five shillings to his captors. The Edinburgh watchmen on one occasion actually did capture the future Lord Chancellor and his companions, and consign them to durance vile; but, as we should expect, it happened that this time they were not in the wrong; but were displaying their chivalry by interposing to prevent a mob of bakers from beating an unfortunate woman. Of course Dogberry made no nice distinctions of persons, but consigned both the disturbers and defenders of the peace to the watchhouse. This was, however, an instance of very unusual vigilance on the part of the City Guard. It was but rarely that they were sufficiently on the alert to catch any of those engaged in these nocturnal pranks; nor can this be wondered at, considering what the guardians of the peace were in those days. They were not generally more than 200 in number, and were all old, hard-featured veterans, whose general history was that, after being mauled in the wars, commonly in a Highland regiment, they were discharged, and, returning home, thought themselves fortunate if they got into this fragment of the old burgher militia, where the pay was better than nothing, and the discipline not quite inconsistent with whisky, while the service was limited to keeping the peace within the city. Their uniform was a red coat turned up with blue, a red waistcoat, red breeches, long black gaiters, white belts, and large cocked hats bound with white worsted ribbon. They had muskets and bayonets, but rarely used them; for their peculiar weapon was the genuine old Lochaber axe. But it must not be supposed that, because the peaceful slumbers of the good citizens of Edinburgh were occasionally disturbed by pranks such as those above described, *the lives of the youths who took part in them were spent in idleness and dissipation.* That this was not the case, the subsequent

careers of Brougham, the ringleader, and of many of his companions, are sufficient proof. Brougham's father was an Englishman, who, coming into possession of a small estate in Westmoreland, and having experienced a serious disappointment in a love affair, had, after wandering about in an unsettled state of mind for some time, at last married a Scotch lady, niece of Dr. Robertson, the historian, and set up his household gods in Edinburgh. There his son Henry was born on September 19, 1778. At a very early age the lad is said to have given evidence of precocious talents. He was taught to read and write by his mother, and after attending a small day-school for a short time, was sent, when barely seven years of age, to the High School, at that time in its most flourishing condition. Here he greatly distinguished himself, notwithstanding the weak state of his health, and attracted the notice of Dr. Adam. Quitting the High School as 'Dux,' at the age of thirteen, and being as yet considered too young to enter the University, he studied for a year with a private tutor at Brougham. Entering the University of Edinburgh in the winter of 1792, he devoted himself especially to the study of natural science and mathematics; and when only sixteen he wrote a treatise on the 'Refraction of Light,' which gained the prize adjudged by a German University for that subject. He also wrote sundry papers on mathematical and scientific subjects, which were read before the Royal Society, and published in its 'Transactions.' At the conclusion of his four years' curriculum at the University, he travelled for some time on the Continent, and on his return he 'passed advocate' in 1800. His progress at the Scotch bar was not such as to satisfy his ambition, for the only employment he obtained was the defence of the very poorest class of prisoners. Even in this unremunerative line of practice he was far from successful, for he had one of the great faults to which an advocate is peculiarly liable—that of caring much less for his clients' success than his own glorification. Provided only that he could gratify his love of display by the delivery of a brilliant speech, he cared little or not at all which way the judgment went. In person, at this time, Brougham was tall and awkward, with strongly marked features and a very long neck. A slight convulsive movement of the lips gave at times an unpleasant aspect to his expression, but his laugh was hearty and genial, and the real goodness of his heart and his kind and cheerful manners generally prepossessed in his favour even those whom his external disadvantages had disposed to regard him unfavourably. In conversation he was inexhaustible. On commonplace topics he talked with ease and good sense, but *without showing any capability for raising them above their*

natural level. But on subjects in which he took an interest, the originality of his ideas, the logical acumen of his argument, the bitterness of his satire, his wonderful memory, his command of language, and, above all, his intense earnestness and conviction of the indisputable correctness of his own views, bore down all opposition and gave his hearers a high idea of his powers. The same qualities were apparent in his public speaking, for which he early evinced great aptitude, and for which the possession of a voice of great power and flexibility rendered him peculiarly fitted. He had a curious habit, which he says was imitated from a preacher whom he sometimes heard in Edinburgh, of dropping his voice almost to a whisper, whenever he wished particularly to emphasize a sentence. This was often done with most dramatic effect, and 'Brougham's whispers' were afterwards well known in the English House of Commons. He wrote with a rapidity and facility perfectly marvellous. Treatises on politics, on natural science, on mathematics, reviews, essays, a voluminous work on 'Colonial Policy'—'quicquid agunt homines'—he had attempted everything when little more than a boy. Lord Campbell says that if shut up in a tower for a year, without access to a single book of reference, he could have written a by no means despicable encyclopædia. His style is clear, strong, and concise. The mere clothing of his ideas was evidently a work of no labour at all. His great fault was an insatiable desire of being accounted singular and eccentric, of being a universal genius, an 'Admirable Crichton.' He was always endeavouring to attract people's attention, to outshine and eclipse all with whom he came in contact. Even in drinking he wished to make Mr. Robertson believe that he could conquer, not only his own companions, but even a hard-headed old Scotch exciseman. He seemed to aim at the character which Dryden ascribes to the Duke of Buckingham:—

'A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome;
Who in the course of one revolving moon
Was chemist, statesman, fiddler, and buffoon.'

He had an unshakeable belief in himself—in his own industry and his own ability. To a certain extent this belief was fully justified, but the glory of having rivalled Bacon, Newton, and Burke in their several spheres was not to be concentrated in one individual.

Francis Jeffrey was cast in a very different mould. He was older than Brougham by several years, having been born on October 23, 1773, in Edinburgh, where his father held one of the deputy clerkships of the court of session. Francis was sent at

the age of eight to the High School, where he remained six years without particularly distinguishing himself. At fourteen he went to the University of Glasgow for a couple of sessions, and he spent the next eighteen months at home, in Edinburgh, where he attended the law classes in the University. In September 1791 he entered at Queen's College, Oxford, but he disliked both the place and its inhabitants, and accordingly left in July 1792. During all the time that he attended these various places of instruction he worked hard and perseveringly in his own peculiar way, and, even thus early, he evinced the taste for literary criticism by the exercise of which he afterwards acquired his reputation. It was his invariable practice, from his school-days upwards, to take notes of the contents of every book he read, and then to criticise it carefully and elaborately. Many manuscript volumes of these early exercises were found among his papers at his death, and they serve to show that the marvellous subtlety and felicity which distinguish the literary criticisms with which he in after years enriched the pages of the 'Edinburgh Review' were the result, not merely of a sort of instinct, but of patient industry and persevering work. After leaving Oxford he began to turn his thoughts to his future career, and, after rejecting the ideas of a literary and a mercantile life, he finally determined to enter at the Scotch bar. He was formally admitted to practice on December 16, 1794. For many years his progress at the bar was very slow, and he often had thoughts of quitting it and trying some other profession. Gradually, however, he worked himself into some small practice. In 1801 he married a second cousin of his own. This was a bold step, for the lady had no fortune, and Jeffrey himself had told his brother in a letter written only six months before, 'My profession has never yet brought me in 100*l.* a year.' The young couple began housekeeping in a style suited to their very limited means in the third story of a house in Buccleugh Place, Edinburgh, and here they were living in the year 1802.

Jeffrey's personal appearance was not remarkable. His complexion was very dark; his features were good and clearly cut; he had a high intellectual forehead and firmly set lips. He was very short, and almost diminutive in person—a circumstance which called forth innumerable jokes from his friend Sydney Smith. 'Look at my little friend Jeffrey,' said Smith, 'he hasn't body enough to cover his mind decently with: his intellect is indecently exposed.' On another occasion, Jeffrey, having arrived unexpectedly at Foston when Smith was from home, amused himself by joining the children, who were riding a donkey. After a time, greatly to the delight of his young playmates, Jeffrey himself mounted the animal,

and Smith, returning at the time, sang out the following impromptu :—

‘ Witty as Horatius Flaccus,
Great a Jacobin as Gracchus,
Short, but not as fat as Bacchus,
Riding on a little Jackass.’

His fondness for children was remarkable. He was never so happy as when in their society. He was a most devoted husband and father. He was passionately attached to his native city, Edinburgh, and was always miserable away from it. It was the same all through life: he never could reconcile himself to new places, people, or habits. His letters from Glasgow and Oxford, and, in later years, from America and London, are all full of complaints of his loneliness and longings for home. In society his manners were pleasant and courteous, though somewhat reserved with strangers; but with his intimates his conversation was open and unrestrained, and evidently the natural outcome of a mind stored with an immense amount of accurate and interesting information. His accent in talking was unpleasant, as his endeavours during his Oxford career to acquire a correct English pronunciation had resulted only in a high and apparently affected tone of voice. Lord Holland said that, though he had got rid of his broad Scotch, he had acquired only a narrow English. The same defect was apparent in his public speaking, in which he was never very successful. His industry was indefatigable, and his general information of the widest range, perfectly accurate, and always at command. He had a natural aptitude for literary criticism, which from a very early age he had carefully cultivated and fostered, so that probably no man at that time could have been found more peculiarly fitted for the position, which was unanimously conceded to him by his colleagues in the great literary undertaking with which his name will always be associated.

Francis Horner, the eldest son of an Edinburgh merchant, was born on August 12, 1778. His earliest friend was Henry Brougham, who was one month his junior, and with whom he used to play about on the pavement before his father's house. In 1786 he was sent to the High School, where he remained six years, and attained the distinguished position of ‘Dux,’ or head boy of the school. He matriculated at the university of Edinburgh in November 1792, and having passed through all his classics with credit, quitted it in 1795. It was both his own and his father's wish that he should adopt the bar as his profession; and, with a view to afford him every possible educational advantage, he was sent to London to study for a couple of years. He ‘passed advo-

cate' in June 1800. Horner's character was singularly consistent all through life. As a boy at school he is described by his contemporaries as grave, sedate, and studious. His attachment to the truth was so inflexible that not even in jest could he brook the slightest deviation from it. Unswerving in his steady honesty of purpose and pursuit of the right, possessed of a cool, clear head, and sound judgment, he was invariably respected and looked up to even by his political adversaries. Smith said that Horner had the ten commandments written on his face, and that he looked so virtuous that he might commit any crime and no one would believe him guilty. Though not a man of genius, or even of a very high order of ability, he made up for any deficiencies in this respect by his indefatigable industry and powers of application. His early death alone prevented him from reaching a very high position in the political world.

Brougham, Jeffrey, and Horner had all chosen the bar as a profession, and they were the most eminent for their abilities among the younger members of the Scotch bar in the first years of the century. They were the leading spirits among a little band of young men, who were closely bound together by the ties of personal friendship and similar political opinions. Other members of the brotherhood were John Macfarlane, Archibald Fletcher, Thomas Thomson, Thomas Grahame, George Joseph Bell, Henry Cockburn, James Moncrieff, George Cranstoun, and John Allen. All political power being at that time, and having been for many years, in the hands of the Tories, the judges were, of course, all of that faith. Party spirit ran high; and every man who held opinions opposed to those of the dominant majority was assumed to be willing and ready to go to the most extreme lengths—Republicanism, Revolution, Regicide. The following is Sydney Smith's account of the state of party feeling at that time:

'From the beginning of the century to the death of Lord Liverpool, was an awful period for those who ventured to maintain liberal opinions; and who were too honest to sell them for the ermine of the judge or the lawn of the prelate. A long and hopeless career in your profession, the chuckling grin of the noodle, the sarcastic leer of the genuine political rogue; prebendaries, deans, bishops, made over your head; reverend renegades advanced to the highest dignities of the Church for helping to rivet the fetters of Catholic and Protestant dissenters; and no more chance of a Whig administration than of a thaw in Zembla. These were the penalties exacted for liberality of opinion at that period; and, not only was there no pay, but there were many stripes. It is always considered a piece of impertinence in England if a man of

less than two or three thousand a year has any opinions at all on important subjects; and in addition he was sure to be assailed with all the Billingsgate of the French Revolution. Jacobin, Atheist, Socinian, leveller, incendiary, regicide, were the gentlest appellations used; and any man who breathed a syllable against the senseless bigotry of the two Georges, or hinted at the abominable tyranny and persecution exercised against Catholic Ireland, was shunned as unfit for the relations of social life. Not a murmur against any abuse permitted. To say a word against the suicidal delays of the Court of Chancery, or the cruel punishments of the game laws, or against any abuse which a rich man inflicted and a poor man suffered, was treason against the plousiocracy, and was bitterly and steadily resented.' A young man, therefore, known to hold Whig opinions, was looked upon as an outcast. He had no hope of obtaining any promotion in his profession, and clients would rarely employ an advocate on whom the judges looked with disfavour. There was a particular corner in the 'Outer House' where these pariahs congregated. This was known as 'The Mountain,' the name by which the most extreme party in the French Revolutionary Assembly was distinguished. Here they walked and talked together, shunned by the more fortunate adherents of the party in power; occasionally employed in some small and unremunerative business by a friendly solicitor for the sake of old family friendship, but with little hope of ever working themselves up to the position which their talents entitled them to expect. This ostracism was, however, not an unmixed evil, but, in some respects, even a positive good; want of professional employment gave them leisure for cultivating literature; persecution drew more closely the bonds of personal friendship, and made them self-dependent.

In 1797, Edinburgh society received an addition by the advent of a young English clergyman, who came to reside there in the capacity of tutor to the son of the squire of the parish of which he had been curate for two years. The reverend gentleman's name was Sydney Smith. The son of a gentleman of good family and fortune in the south of England, Sydney was born at Woodford in Essex in 1771. He was educated at Winchester and at New College, Oxford. His own wish was to enter at the English bar, but his father, having been at great expense in educating and starting in life his other three sons, prevailed upon Sydney to embrace the clerical profession. He was accordingly ordained, and accepted the small curacy of Netherhaven, a village situated in the middle of Salisbury Plain. Here he formed a close friendship with the squire of the parish, Mr. Beach; who, after Smith

had held the curacy for a couple of years, requested him to resign it and go abroad as tutor to his eldest son. They started for the University of Weimar in Saxony; but before reaching their destination, Germany was convulsed by war, and they put in to Edinburgh. Smith's unrivalled social qualities and evident talents soon obtained for him the *entrée* to the best society that the city afforded, and he always looked back upon his residence there with feelings of pleasure. Writing many years afterwards he says: 'When shall I see Edinburgh again? Never shall I forget the happy days passed there, amid odious smells, barbarous sounds, bad suppers, excellent hearts, and most enlightened and cultivated understandings.' His description of his housekeeping gives us an insight into the domestic economy of a Scotch household at the time. 'I have had great domestic troubles since I wrote to you last. The housemaid has rebelled. She has seven sweethearts, and she says she will go out. I have, I think, conquered her. My Scotch servants bargained they were not to have salmon more than three times a week, and always pulled off their stockings, in spite of my repeated oburgations, the moment my back was turned. We all tried to make a pie by our joint efforts—the cook, the courier, and I; the crust was as hard as biscuit, and we could not eat it. The cook has sixpence per day; and the other girl has her board only. I have been in a terrible quandary about lodgings. The woman of the house where I live was extremely civil all the summer, when lodgings are of no value; but at the approach of winter, when the town was so full that no lodgings were to be got, because I would not give her twelve guineas instead of nine, she called me a Levite, a scourge of human nature, and an extortioner, and gave me notice to go out instantly, bag and baggage, without beat of drum or colours flying. I refused to stir, and, after a very severe battle, in which I threatened to carry it through all the courts of law in England, and from thence to Russia, she began to make the amiable and to confess that she was apt to be a little warm; that she had the most perfect confidence in my generosity, and the old story. I made her sign an agreement with subscription of two witnesses, and I am now lord of the castle for the time, I tell you.' . . . 'The best way of giving you an idea of the Scotch is to show you in what they principally differ from the English. In the first place (to begin with their physical peculiarities) they are larger in body than the English; and the women (I say it to my shame) handsomer than the English women: their dialect is very agreeable. The Scotch certainly do not understand cleanliness; they are poorer than the English; they are a cautious and a discreet people; they are very

much in earnest in their religion, though less so than they were. They are perhaps in some points of view the most remarkable nation in the world, and no country can afford an example of so much order, morality, economy, and knowledge amongst the lower classes of society.' . . . 'The Scotch are so imbued with metaphysics that they even make love metaphysically. I overheard a young lady of my acquaintance at a dance in Edinburgh exclaim in a pause of the music—"What you say, my lord, is very true of love in the *abstract*, but"—here the fiddlers began fiddling furiously, and the rest was lost.' Of the dirt in Edinburgh after a thaw, he says, 'Except the morning after the flood was over, I should doubt if it had ever been dirtier.'

In 1800 Smith married a lady of good family, and with a small fortune, and they settled in Edinburgh with Mr. Beach's second son and Mr. Gordon of Ellon Castle as pupils; for each of whom he received 400*l.* a year, the largest sum that had been given to anyone but Dugald Stewart. In extent of learning Smith could not compare with any of the three men already noticed, but in originality of mind he was undoubtedly their superior, and the subjects with which he was acquainted he knew thoroughly and had always at command. His wit was ever bright and ready—wit of the best and most original kind, which gave a sparkle and brilliancy to all he wrote or said. But it is not for his wit alone that he is to be admired. He had underlying it a solid substratum of the ripest wisdom and the soundest common sense. That he was a good manager and man of business we can see from his letters, and he carried these qualities with him into all the relations of life. His opinions, political and social, were the result of bold but careful thought; and, when once adopted, he was always ready to maintain them by reasoning, not the less sound because it was lighted up by the inexhaustible play of a bright and graceful fancy. Smith soon became acquainted with Brougham, Jeffrey, Horner, and most of the other young men of talent who were then in Edinburgh; and many a joyous evening did they spend together at the houses of one or other of their number, or at places of public resort. Brilliant, indeed, must have been the conversation at these meetings, when Brougham's versatile eloquence, Jeffrey's copious stores of knowledge, Horner's intense earnestness, and Smith's ready wit were all poured into the common fund. Though none of them contemplated making letters or politics the business of their lives, they were all eager for literary distinction, and, confident in their own powers, were longing to find a wider scope for their exercise than the drawing-rooms and debating societies of Edinburgh

afforded. Jeffrey was a pretty frequent contributor to the existing English Reviews, and Brougham had written several papers on scientific subjects, and was meditating an ambitious work on 'Colonial Policy.' The sincere belief which they all entertained of the justness of the political opinions which they advocated led them to look for some means of giving those opinions a more extended publicity than the state of periodical literature in Edinburgh then admitted of. The only Scotch newspapers existing were the 'Caledonian Mercury,' the 'Courant,' and the 'Advertiser;' and these, with the 'Scots Magazine,' were the whole regular produce of the Scotch periodical press at that time. One or two newspapers, such as the 'Scots Chronicle' and the 'Gazetteer,' had at various times been started with the professed object of propagating Whig opinions; but the doctrines they advocated were of so outrageous a character, and the abuse with which they bespattered their opponents was so violent, that they served only to bring the party still further into discredit with all sober-minded and right-thinking persons, and they soon died for want of support. At the same time there was another want which was felt in an equal degree in England as in Scotland; and this was the entire absence of any vehicle for honest and impartial criticism of contemporary literature. All the reviews which professed to supply this want were in the hands of the publishers, and were used to belaud such works as it was to the interest of their proprietors to puff into circulation, and to decry those of their rivals. There was, in fact, no such thing as any medium for an unbiassed review of the works of contemporary writers; and the art of criticism was at its lowest ebb. This state of things was very discouraging; and it would naturally occur to a number of earnest and clever young men to endeavour to find a remedy for it. The only real remedy was to start a Review themselves, to be conducted on new principles. In the first place, it must be left entirely in their own hands, and, if connected with any firm of booksellers or publishers, these must be allowed to exercise no influence whatever over the contributors; moderate, but not violent, Whig opinions must be strongly advocated; all criticisms of new books must be the honest and unbiassed expression of the writer's own judgment. The founding of a review based upon these principles had been for some time the subject of discussion among the little band of friends; but no tangible results had as yet been arrived at when, one evening in March, 1802, Smith and Brougham met at Jeffrey's house in Buccleugh Place, and, the conversation turning upon the subject, Smith startled his companions by proposing to carry the plan into execution without

further delay. Brougham's customary enthusiasm fired at the thought, though Jeffrey's habit of always looking at the dark side of things led him to predict failure. However, his doubts yielded to the ardour of his associates. It was a tempestuous evening, and the three conspirators laughed over the idea of the much greater storm which such a periodical as they were contemplating would be likely to raise in the world. The matter was taken into serious consideration, a list of probable contributors was drawn up, Smith promised to undertake the task of editing, and it was agreed to begin. They even got so far at this first meeting as to discuss the motto by which the new literary venture should be distinguished. Smith proposed 'Tenui musam meditamur avenâ'— 'We cultivate the muses on a little oatmeal.' This, however, was afterwards objected to as too near the literal fact; and subsequently, on Horner's proposition, 'Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur'— 'The judge is convicted when the guilty is acquitted,' a sentence extracted from the works of Publius Syrus, was substituted. The affair was not allowed to stagnate; other meetings were held at Jeffrey's house, at which the original three were joined by Murray, Horner, Brown, Lord Webb Seymour, and John and Thomas Thomson; with characteristic energy, Brougham and Smith set about obtaining promises of support from friends who were willing to contribute articles, and discovering a publisher sufficiently adventurous to undertake the risk of launching a Review based upon a system so new and so startling. Negotiations were in the first instance entered into with the old Edinburgh firm of Manners and Miller, booksellers in the Parliament Close. Though at first inclined to embark in the speculation, they declined to have any connection with it, when they found that some works in which they were interested were unfavourably reviewed, and it was evident that a similar objection was to be expected from any of the firms who held to the timid old-fashioned modes of conducting their business. Some new and more enterprising man must be sought out. Smith then made an arrangement with Longman, who was a relation, to act as the London publisher, and the Edinburgh portion of the work was entrusted to Constable, afterwards so well known from his connection with Sir Walter Scott. No man could have been selected more likely to bring the new undertaking to a successful issue. Constable began as a lad in the shop of Hill, one of the principal Edinburgh booksellers. He set up in business for himself, and, almost at one stride, reached the summit of his profession. He was a man of an enterprising spirit and large views. Casting aside the timid grudging policy which had hitherto been pursued, he

showed himself the patron of all promising new literary undertakings. His liberality to authors was on a scale which confounded, not only his rivals in the trade, but the authors themselves. Ten, even twenty, guineas for a review; 2,000*l.* or 3,000*l.* for a single poem; and 1,000*l.* each for two philosophical dissertations prefixed to a supplement of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, were prices which had never before been heard or even dreamt of in Edinburgh. But this liberal spirit called forth all the latent talent to which the old system held out no inducement; and, in a short time, made Edinburgh a literary mart second only to London itself. Constable at once closed with Smith's offer, and stipulated that the promoters of the new journal should furnish him with at least four numbers as an experiment. No remuneration was to be given to the contributors until some judgment could be formed as to the chances of ultimate success or failure, and accordingly all these first four numbers were given gratuitously. The difficulty of finding a suitable publisher having been thus satisfactorily overcome, other obstacles soon cropped up, which threatened to bring the scheme to an untimely end. These obstacles were principally found among the contributors themselves, and the credit of having surmounted them is undoubtedly due to the tact and energy of Smith. First, there were Jeffrey's ever-recurring doubts and fears. He was really the man upon whom they all relied for success, as he had experience in writing for reviews, and his acknowledged critical skill made him simply invaluable. While always ready to do full justice to Brougham's great talents, Smith had strongly opposed his being admitted to any share in the undertaking, as he feared that his headstrong, restless spirit would bring it to grief; and he soon had cause to own that he had judged him only too justly. Brougham at first embraced the project with all his natural enthusiasm; but, when called upon to make good his promises, he started objections, and finally declared that he would have nothing to do with the affair. However, he was coaxed into a more manageable frame of mind, and rendered some really valuable assistance. Other difficulties arose from the absence of Horner and Allen; upon the former of whom Smith greatly relied. The following extract from a letter written by Jeffrey to Horner will show how little had been done even as late as April, though the first number was to appear in June. 'Smith has gone through more than half his task; so has Hamilton; Allen has made some progress; and Murray and myself, I believe, have studied our parts and tuned our instruments, and are almost ready to begin. On the other hand, Thomson is sick, Brown has engaged

for nothing but Miss Baillie's plays; Timothy has engaged for nothing, but professed it to be his opinion the other day that he would never put pen to paper in our cause. Brougham must have a sentence to himself; and, I am afraid, you will not think it a pleasant one. You remember how cheerfully he approved of our plan at first, and agreed to give us an article or two without hesitation. Three or four days ago I proposed two or three books that I thought would suit him; he answered with perfect good humour that he had changed his view of our plan a little, and rather thought that he should decline to have any connection with it.' In consequence of the delays which these various difficulties entailed, the work was not sufficiently advanced for publication in June as originally intended.

The secret had been well kept; in fact, the precautions taken had been extreme, for the contributors repaired to the printing-house separately, and by obscure and devious ways, and quitted it in a similar manner. When, therefore, in October 1802, the work did at last see the light, it fell like a bomb-shell into the midst of the literary world. There had been nothing like it before. It introduced an entirely new method of reviewing; for, not confining themselves to a mere analysis of the works before them, the writers gave dissertations upon the subjects. Then, too, the universality of the knowledge, the boldness of the thought, the purity of the style, the brilliancy of the wit, and, as a rule, the soundness of the judgment displayed, placed the new journal at once upon an elevation to which none of its predecessors had even aspired. The first edition consisted of seven hundred and fifty copies, which were exhausted in a few days, and a second edition was brought out. This, too, went off almost as rapidly, and successive editions followed. Constable was highly delighted, and even Jeffrey ventured to hope. Arrangements were set on foot with a view to continuing the issue of the work, and terms of payment for the editor and contributors were agreed upon. Jeffrey was appointed the permanent editor, with a salary of three hundred pounds a year, and with complete control over the publication. The contributors were to receive ten guineas a sheet. No person, however large his income, was allowed to refuse this remuneration. These terms were liberal in the extreme at that time, but they were soon increased, the editor's salary to five hundred pounds, and the contributors' to a minimum of sixteen guineas a sheet, though the average was much higher, ranging in most cases from twenty to twenty-five guineas a sheet. The circulation increased with wonderful rapidity. In six years it had reached nine thousand, and in ten years thirteen thousand copies. This unexampled success,

and the high position which the work immediately attained, soon brought to the aid of the original promoters some of the greatest names in literature and science. But, though assisted by occasional contributions from such men as Murray, Brown, Allen, Thomson, Walter Scott, Playfair, Emsley, and Hamilton—Jeffrey, Brougham, Smith, and Horner were for some years the mainstay of the affair. In the first twenty numbers, Brougham wrote eighty articles, Jeffrey seventy-five, Smith twenty-three, and Horner fourteen. The articles contributed by the last mentioned were almost exclusively devoted to subjects connected with political economy, a science which was at that time but little studied or understood; but his three friends took a wider range, and did not confine themselves to any one subject. Brougham's articles were principally upon mathematical, scientific, or political subjects. Jeffrey discussed metaphysics, politics, biography, morals, poetry, fiction, travels, and political economy. Smith as a rule applied himself to social subjects, such as the spread of education; the restriction of fanaticism, and injudicious attempts at proselytism; the state of pulpit eloquence; the bad government of many of our colonies; the horrible state of our gaols; the criminal, game, and poor laws; and he also reviewed many works of fiction and travel both French and English.

No one can doubt that the establishment of the new journal was a great boon conferred both upon the literary and political worlds. Though of course it sometimes fell into grave errors, particularly those of political intolerance and critical harshness, which were to be expected from a new venture, its general boldness and honesty of purpose, and the high tone of impartiality and fairness which, though often departed from, was always aimed at, tended to elevate the general character of periodical writing. Nor can it be denied the merit of having in a great measure contributed to bring about the reform of many of the abuses with which our social system was then tainted—such as criminal law and prison reform, the abolition of the slave trade, and many more.

To attempt to give any detailed history of the after career of the Review would be too long a task; it has long occupied an honourable place in English periodical literature, and few will now be inclined to deny that a debt of gratitude is due to the men by whose efforts it was founded.

G. A. ROGERS.

Ulanderdecken's Dream.

At last, repose ! all still. Yet in mine ear
 Sounds the deep roar of waters, and my brain
 Swims with th' eternal motion. Do I live ?
 And is the awful whirl—the weary beat,
 At length at rest ? Shut out the hideous days
 When my wrung eyes strained o'er the leaden prairie,
 And longed-for night brought me no welcome darkness—
 For then the solemn sentinels, patrolling,
 Lit up the waste, flashing their ghastly foam.
 At times the misty folds were lifted. Then
 Revealed the tender shore—soft light and colours—
 Men and maidens flitting : to faint chimings
 From the turret in the red-tiled roof :
 And as my rack'd heart yearned at the sight—
 Longing—panting for this sweet delight,
 Down roll the inky folds : my awful masters
 Roared in their fury, ' Onward, on for ever !
 Joy at thy lips : but never shalt thou taste.'
 And I was whirled away, shrieking to Heav'n,
 ' O mercy, give me pause ! one moment's rest !
 Take me from this torture ! Give me Death !'
 This my rack, most exquisite and devilish.
 So with some wretched soul, when she he loved
 Lies still before him : his strain'd eyelids
 Wrung with long watchings, drooping till he sleeps :
 Then does the sweet lost one come to him, smiling ;
 Greeting with her old joy, as though just returned :
 And he walks forth with her, through calm green lanes,
 Wondering, yet filled with soft delight—
 In tender summer's light, full of sweet sadness—
 When, of a sudden, she is snatched away—
 And waking with a cry, and arms outstretched,
 Bleak dawn has chilled him back into his grief.
 This my torture—Vultures of despair
 Chained at my heart—the minutes long as days,
 The days, as years—the years—

When will it end ?

But now 'tis past ! My prison lies beyond,

And here is Life again ! Sweet Earth, fond mother !
 Rage on, ye baffled monsters ! I am Free !
 Now do I mock your bolts and watery bonds.
 Alas, I rave ! 'Tis but reprieve—brief furlough—
 Is not there one white soul to ransom mine ?
 See ! in yon clustered houses, on the hill—
 The dawn just lifting up her chill blue mantle—
 I know my covert. There my quarry sleeps ;
 Dreams of her rustic, who at village dance
 Whispered his love into her coral ear.
 The Fowler comes. I've marked you, innocent !
 One week hence—Poor child ! I know not mercy.
 And women traffic with men's hearts—She'll find me
 Steel and rock. Let both be lost together !
 But to the work.

O ! long sweet evening, at the cottage door,
 By bending stream, or near the spreading tree :
 All in a golden glow, and tender calm—
 Eternal twilight—here I find my rest.
 The sense—so exquisite ! that all is done !
 O gentle eyes, transparent to my soul ;
 I gaze upon the loving heart within,
 That wearied out the Vengeance with its sighs.
 O ! too indulgent Heaven ! ever pitying—
 That sends the gracious rain, forgiving all—
 Whispering all is paid—the score wiped out !
 The panting crowds shall fret and battle for the crown—
 This poor scarred heart is healed. Here in one calm
 My life shall melt away !

What chilling touch
 Curdles my soul ! My eyes are darkening—
 I sink—and shiver. And a clanging Bell
 Swings in my brain—that tolls the awful end !
 'Save me !' I gasp. Despair ! Then clutch the plank
 That drifts beside me. 'Give, give your life !
 Your vows, your oath ! Redeem me—quick ! I die.'
 Answered her loving eyes, all joyful, 'Only that !'
 Then to my tale of Sin ; my hurried words
 Burst from their gates—a hideous maddened crowd.
 There was I all revealed ; the impious soul,
 That flung defiance to the Highest Heaven,
 And on that fatal night gave bond to Satan

That till the Judgment Day—

‘Accursed!’ she shrieked,

And, shrieking, fled.

All on a card, and lost!

She shrank from me. This tainted, leprous thing
I call my soul pierced through the tinsel.
The draught was at my lip, and snatched from me
Her heart, a fallen leaf beneath my feet
To tread upon. She's saved, and I—am lost!
Despair! The moments, tramping on to midnight,
Drag me with them. O! the end—the end!
Hark to their murmurings as they fret, impatient.
They are at hand—Just as the doomèd one
Sees through the prison gates flung open—sudden,
The blood-red scaffold, and the awful waste
Of upturned greedy faces—waiting him—
I dare not look; yonder the hideous thing,
My prison through the long, long night,
The blood-red sail, wafting a chill of death.
The moments slip from me, whipped by furies
Into wild gallop. Oh, the End! The End!
What shall I do? No, no! Not yet, not yet;
Some space!—show pity—Oh, turn back the hours—
They heed not my wild prayers—As well the wretch
That's caught and tangled in the whirling engine
May pray its cruel teeth to spare him. See,
The air is thickening: they close in upon me;
Foul pinions flap upon my cheek—I hear
Their forkèd tongues hiss in my ear ‘Too late!’
The dismal chime, wailed out by kindly angels
In yon barred Heaven never to be mine!
The earth, the air, the gale, the wave—‘Too late!’
The fatal cry. They come for me! I am lost!
I feel the icy mail upon my heart! O! Mercy!
Mercy!

PERCY FITZGERALD.

An Adventure in a Forest.

BY JAMES PAYN.

I WAS sitting two years ago, with an American lady and her husband, in one of the cool parlours of 'Botham's,' at Salt Hill,—that fine old inn, which, though it had had its day, still up to that date maintained its dignity. I was telling them how in the 'King's Room,' above-stairs, the allied monarchs with old Blücher had dined together, and how, every year, old King George III. or jolly King William had been wont at Montem time to visit the hospitable place, when the air rang with boyish shouts, and the full-foliaged garden was gay with Greek and Albanian, with Turk and Spaniard, with admiral and post-captain, all in duodecimo editions. The old-world legends of the place, and, above all, the literary air, blown across from Stoke Pogis (Gray's burial-place), not two miles away, delighted my transatlantic friends, and, indeed, we all three were having 'a good time' at Botham's, and naturally enough, perhaps, we began talking about old English inns.

'Now, the inn of all others I should like to see,' said the lady, 'is the old Maypole Inn at Chigwell, drawn by Cattermole so beautifully in Dickens's "Barnaby Rudge."'

I did not know where Chigwell was, but I gallantly said, 'And you shall see it.'

There is nothing astonishes English people (and I hope shames some of them) in their companionship with their American cousins so much as the interest which the latter take in all things literary, and especially in the English classics. I will venture to say that the average educated American—and there are few who are not, at all events, well read in our common tongue—knows better than his English cousin where our great men are buried or have been born, where they wrote their more celebrated works, and what localities they have immortalised. This wish to visit Dickens's Maypole, for example, though every way pleasant and natural, was what had never occurred to myself, though I know my Dickens as well as most men, and love him more than most. But as to Chigwell, I had forgotten that the scene of the rioters' visit to the inn was laid there, and I only vaguely knew that it was somewhere in Epping Forest. Nay, I only knew Epping Forest as a spot rarely visited save by the wild East Enders on their Sundays 'outings,' and, in connection with some bill in Parliament re-

specting its preservation. To my American friends, just fresh from the Windsor glades, it suggested vast ancestral trees and herds of deer; and though I had my doubts of anything quite so noble as *that*, I partly shared their expectations. At all events, there would be the inn, more antique now than when the great novelist described it, with its huge porch and carved oak parlours, and gracious associations such as cling around the picturesque abodes of old. And there would be, methought, if not a venison pasty and black-jack of ale, still some good homely fare, and honest liquor in which to drink the memory of him who drew the raven and his master, and sent down Cattermole, R.A., to draw the Maypole Inn.

It is astonishing how quickly have fallen to Dickens's lot that tender reverence and sympathy among his countrymen—and, I may add, at least as much among his transatlantic cousins—which ordinarily takes many years, and even generations, to grow about a dead writer. A small and 'highly cultured' clique, indeed, there still is who contend that posterity will pronounce a different verdict; but considering that their contempt for every thing about them—people, places, and things—is so overwhelming, and that the Present has almost no value with them when compared with the Past, it seems to me that the Future and the opinions of our descendants should in their eyes, by analogy, have no value at all. In the mean time, it is certain that no writer has been so successful in making his works part and parcel of the language of his country, I do not say in so short a time, but even without that restriction. Dickens is more quoted by other writers, even by those who affect to depreciate him, than *any* author. The very sayings of his characters, as well as his characters themselves, have already, indeed, become 'household words;' and with respect to his humour, there is an especial and very melancholy reason why we prize it and yet use it so familiarly: with Dickens all real fun has died. We have still, and partly thanks to him, writers who have command of pathos, and who exhibit genuine sympathy with the lot of the Many; but with him all our high spirits seem to have died out. His loss has really done what that of Garrick was by an hyperbole described to have done: it has 'eclipsed the gaiety of nations.' We have no one else who can tickle our heart-strings with a Micawber or a Sam Weller, and therefore we cling to those immortal conceptions, and are interested by even the scenes in which the Great Master placed them to play their own parts. In this respect the localities of '*Barnaby Rudge*,' including the famous Maypole, have a double attraction, since an historical as well as a literary interest attaches

to them. It was Dickens's first attempt, and a most successful one, at the historical novel. It is of necessity, therefore, in some respects less like himself, and in consequence has failed to secure the suffrages of 'the clique' I have spoken of, less than any of his others. They are so good as to state that it is the first book in which Dickens exhibited any power of drawing a gentleman—in the person, I suppose, of Mr. Harewood, though it may possibly be that Sir John Chester has been identified by them with that type of character.

It was for far better reasons, you may be sure, however, that my American friends admired 'Barnaby Rudge,' and were anxious to visit the famous inn—itself so picturesque a fragment of old times—where old John Willett was tied and bound by the mad London mob, and where his noble son abode, whom she who has given her name of late to so many a fashionable garb clave to so faithfully, and about which still hang the echoes of that dread alarm-bell which, though it gave but a single knell, still speaks of murder done.

Naturally, all the arrangements for visiting the Maypole—an excursion which was, of course, to include the deer forest of Epping—devolved on me, the Britisher; and, to begin with, I am ashamed to say I had to consult 'Bradshaw's Railway Guide' as to how we were to get there.

The East End of London is literally a *terra incognita* to us West Enders, and even our starting-point was much too distant to be reached by cab or carriage. An extension of the Metropolitan Railway, however, seemed to promise to take us to the required station, and by it, on the day appointed, we started accordingly. It landed us somewhere in the City, and from it we were directed by an official to Liverpool Street Station—only just across the way—where tickets could be procured to Epping. And here it was that our difficulties in search of the desired shrine began.

The booking clerk at Liverpool Street Station, when I said, 'Three for Epping,' replied, 'For Epping?' doubtfully, and then consulted a little ledger. 'Well, you see, you *can* go to Epping by this line of rail, but it isn't usual.'

I did not wish, of course, to induce my American friends to do any thing more unusual than what they had in hand (for nobody that I could discover among all my circle of acquaintances, which is large, had ever tried the expedition on which *we* were bound), and accordingly I went back to the Metropolitan line to be directed on our way afresh. But, like the little damsel in the poem of 'We are Seven,' the officials stuck to their text—the Liverpool

Street Station was the station for Epping, and, to their knowledge, a thousand people had gone that way 'a-foresting' only that very morning. This latter piece of intelligence was not pleasing to me (though I did not breathe it to my friends), for a thousand foresters were likely to exercise a disturbing influence on a comparatively limited locality, and if any of them, by unhappy chance, should have a literary taste, they might have already seized and occupied the best—that is, the most picturesque—apartments that the Maypole had to offer. Upon our second application, the clerk gave us tickets to Epping, though, as it were, under protest, and giving us notice that we should have to change at Bethnal Green—the dismalest, ugliest, and most abject portion of London, and wholly unconnected with literature, except by a specimen of early ballad poetry, singular to say, comparatively unknown in the United States.

If a thousand 'foresters' had preceded us on our road, a good many, it seemed, were still left to accompany us, whose lips even at that comparatively early hour had made acquaintance with the flagon; but they were not, I concluded from their style of conversation, persons who affected literature, nor, on that account at least, likely to visit the Maypole.

At Bethnal Green, and for many stations afterwards, our view was bounded by walls and roofs; but as we emerged from the great wilderness of brick and mortar, the pleasant fields of Essex began to appear as heralds of the fairer scenes beyond.

We were the only people, as it seemed to me, who patronised the first-class at all, which perhaps accounted for the guard in his turn (doubtless with the idea of a 'tip' in his head) patronising us.

'For the Forest, I suppose, gentlemen?' said he, putting his head into our open window as we drew near our destination.

'Yes,' said I; 'for Epping.'

'Oh, but Epping ain't the Forest, sir; very true it's *called* Epping, and you *can* get to it *from* Epping.'

'How very extraordinary!' observed my American lady; 'that is the very same thing the booking clerk said!'

I had no explanation to offer of this eccentric behaviour of my countrymen, so I confined myself to asking which station would be more convenient for us to alight at, since Epping was not the place for Epping.

'Well, you had better try Loughton, sir.'

I didn't like the idea of 'trying Loughton,' as though the notion of finding the forest at all (let alone our way in it) was doubtful; but of course I assented. However, before this experi-

ment could be made, the guard's elbow appeared at the window again, with, 'What *part* of the Forest, now, may you be in search of, ma'am?' He had observed by this time that the lady was our guiding star, as indeed she was (and deserved to be), and henceforth addressed himself exclusively to her.

'Well, we wish to go to the Maypole,' said she sweetly.

'The Maypole? Ah, the Maypole Inn, that would be,' answered he, as though we might possibly have come to dance about the pole itself. 'Ah, then Loughton wouldn't be the place; you had best get out at Woodford.'

It was all the same to us; so we got out at Woodford, where the obliging guard informed us that a conveyance could be procured. Such a vehicle it was, too! I am sure the honest blacksmith's cart, in which he drove to Chigwell and met the murderer on the way at night, would have been a far more comfortable conveyance. The driver, however, professed to know the forest well—'Ay, as well as any man alive,' he said—so we felt at least that we should not be lost in its deep and dusky labyrinths; and also, of course, he knew the Maypole. 'It's a longish step from here, however, and it's not the *nichest* inn, by no means, you know.'

We hastened to say that we were not going to the Maypole on account of its convenience of access, but for the sake of the inn itself.

'Well, but it ain't the *best* inn, neither,' insisted he. 'The folks is roughish as has got it just now, and they're about to leave, too, which makes 'em worsen. I reckon you'd be happier like, especially with the lady, at the Druid's Head.'

I confess this information a little staggered me; but 'the lady,' being of opinion that a spice of personal danger would make the expedition more agreeable than otherwise, as giving us, perhaps, some experience of outlaw life in the merry greenwood, was by no means disturbed by it. Her husband, who was not so devoted to literature as to be oblivious of practical matters, inquired whether we could dine at the Maypole.

'Oh, yes, you can *dine*,' was the reply, delivered with what I thought unnecessary emphasis.

'Well, you see, my good man, we don't want to sleep there,' said I, cheerfully.

He nodded, and I could not help confessing to myself that there was that in his nod which seemed to say, 'And very lucky for you.'

'Now, *there's* the Druid's Head,' said he, as, passing through a quaint old-fashioned village, he pointed out a very modest house of entertainment. But we took small notice of his remark, since.

as it happened, my lady friend had just produced a copy of the first edition of 'Barnaby Rudge' (which she had brought with her to refresh her memory), and was calling our attention to the frontispiece, by Cattermole, illustrative of the Maypole itself. Within a mile or so, as we had been informed, we should come in sight of that fine old hostelrie, the picturesqueness of which would doubtless, by the hand of intervening time, be increased rather than otherwise since the great painter drew it. The idea filled us all three with great excitement, and, thanks to the eager Epping air, we were also looking forward to dinner. We already pictured ourselves in a vast apartment of carved oak, or one perhaps hung with moth-eaten tapestry, on one side the huge fireplace with its old-fashioned 'dogs,' on the other the mullioned window (not that all of us quite knew what 'mullioned' was) with its diamond panes, against which the playful creepers tapped. We saw the portly host respectfully bearing in the lordly sirloin and placing it on the groaning board; we saw—But here the driver pulled up short in the dusty road, and, pointing with his whip across the hedge, exclaimed, 'That there's the Maypole.'

Our eyes searched the leafy distance for the gabled ends, the twisted chimneys, the lichen-covered antique roof of old John Willett's dwelling. Our literary lady placed her hand upon her heart, as though to restrain its pulsations. The moment was supreme.

'I guess I don't see it now,' observed her husband.

'It's plain enough, anyways,' said the driver.

And it certainly was—very plain. Close to us, just on the other side of the hedge, was the ugliest, commonest, newest, white-washedest railway beer-house—for it was so small that it could not be called an inn at all—I ever beheld. A door in the middle; a window on each side, and two above them; in the front, a strip of ragged turf; behind, a yard. Not a tree sheltered it. The summer sun beat down upon its unporched front, and displayed all its deformity in hideous detail. Out of the lower windows leaned various heads, surmounted by fur caps and crumpled 'wide-awakes,' the proprietors of which surveyed us in bucolic wonder.

'I do really believe that this *is* the Maypole,' said I, despairingly.

'It cannot, cannot be,' said my lady friend. Her tone suggested a solemn remonstrance addressed to the government of the universe: things could never have come to such a pass, it seemed to convey, under a beneficent scheme of creation. 'You don't mean that this is Dickens's, my man,' continued she, addressing the driver in a conciliatory tone—'the inn of "Barnaby Rudge"?'

He took off his hat and scratched his head, which seemed to afford him little relief; he was evidently at a nonplus. 'Well, ma'am, the fact is, this here inn, though it ain't a-been built more than these four years, is always changing hands. A Rudge, I believe, did have it; but he was Bill Rudge, and not Barnaby. As to the other landlord's name as you mentioned, *I never heerd on it.*'

'This is *shocking*,' said the lady, looking at me. 'The ignorance of your fellow-countrymen—'

'It's not in natur', ma'am,' interrupted the man, stung by this observation, 'that I should remember all them landlords' names, many on 'em having been here but a month or two, and the rent not paid by the half of them even for *that* time. And as to the accommodation, didn't I tell you that you would ha' been better served at the Druid's Head?'

'Is there no *other* Maypole, my good man?' inquired I, with the calmness of despair.

'Well, I've lived hereabout, man and boy, these fifty year, and I never *heerd* o' one.'

I looked at my transatlantic guests, and they looked at me, and then we all three burst out laughing. To have come so far, and with such changings and inconvenience, and so very uncomfortably, in order to arrive at this ridiculous pot-house, struck us all three in so humorous a light, that we fairly roared with laughter. The dreadful people in the Maypole parlours waved their beer mugs at us and laughed also in an idiotic fashion. The driver thought we were laughing at him, and in sulky tones inquired where we would please to be driven to *now*.

'Oh,' I said, 'since there is no Maypole, at least let us see the Forest. Drive into the Forest.'

'This is the Forest,' answered he, waving his whip about in a vague manner. All about us were fields and lanes, a cow or two, and a dog asleep, a hen and chickens in the white road, and a horse-trough.

'Good heavens!' cried I, 'are you making game of us? Where are the deer, the trees, the "boundless contiguity of shade"?''

'I never heerd of no deer, except the one as they brings down in a cart to 'unt o' Easter-Monday. There's trees enuff, aren't there? I dunno what you wants, not I.'

The man was evidently getting very angry, and the more so since my American friends, who were fortunately very good-natured, and had a keen sense of humour, had by this time become speechless with mirth. That there should be not only no Maypole at

Chigwell, but also no forest at Epping, was something too exquisitely ludicrous.

'I insist,' said I, 'upon being shown a forest. You are deceiving us, driver. I have known a gentleman who speaks in the highest terms of Epping Forest and the view from its hill.'

'Ah, you must mean 'Igh Beech,' said he.

'Very likely. Then drive us to High Beech.'

'Well, it's nigh upon seven miles away.'

'I don't care if it's seventy!' cried I, indignantly. 'Drive on.'

I felt that my country would be disgraced in the eyes of my transatlantic friends if that forest was not discovered. And after an interminable drive we arrived at High Beech. This was a cluster of trees upon a highish hill, and really commanded a splendid view; but the fact is, I, for my part, was by that time too hungry to appreciate views. There is a metaphorical phrase commonly applied to children who help themselves to more than they can eat—'Your eye is bigger than your stomach;' and the reverse of that expression was now applicable to our little party. Our eye, even if it could have rested upon Cattermole's Maypole (which I don't believe ever existed), would have been no longer satisfied; another organ required sustenance, and cried, 'Dinner.'

'Is there any decent inn near here, my man, where we can dine?' demanded I.

'Well, there's the Druid's Head and the Maypole—'

'I said *near here*,' I interrupted, fiercely; 'and never let me hear the names of those two hateful inns again.'

'Well, wot do 'ee say to the Stars and Stripes?'

'Come,' said I, cheerfully, 'here is a compliment to the American flag. Has it a garden, my man? and is it clean and comfortable?'

'It 'ave a garden,' rejoined the driver, cautiously; and on he drove.

I will not harrow the gentle reader's heart by describing that inn. It was larger than the Maypole, but, if possible, uglier, and it was full of those gentry who, we had been warned, had preceded us 'out a-foresting.' Nearly the whole thousand must have been at that inn. Over what we ate and how we ate it I draw a discreet veil, and also over the return journey. The getting back to the East End of London was even worse than the departure from it had been. Once, after actually arriving there, we found ourselves in a strange railway station, which, it seems, was the direct one for Epping, and we got very nearly taken back there, the bare idea of which was more ridiculous to us than can be described.

If we didn't absolutely enjoy that day of failures, I am quite sure that no three people ever laughed more within the space of twelve hours. Some people are said 'never to move a muscle' when they indulge in laughing, and I wish that had been my case, for I strained a muscle in my back during an aggravated fit of it. Once at home, I was fortunately enabled to offer my friends a decent meal, and we were very glad to get it. But supper never agrees with me. I had a dreadful dream that night, in which Mrs. Gamp appeared to me. She was driving me in a one-horse chaise, and held her famous umbrella in her hand in place of a whip.

'Where, madam,' inquired I, respectfully, 'is the Maypole Inn?'

She pulled up, and looked me steadily and severely in the face, just as on a certain memorable occasion she once confronted Betsey Prig.

'Young man,' said she, 'I don't believe as there is any such place.'

And, upon my honour, I agree with her.

The reflection made by my lady friend upon this wonderful adventure was, I thought, very characteristic of her sex: 'I wonder what that guard could have thought of us, who imagined us to be bound for the Maypole as it really is!'

Diamonds and Gold.

A TALE OF THE FAR WEST.

My story is laid in the gold-yielding district of British Columbia called Cariboo; the opening scene being at a little mining city to which I will give the name of Nuggetville. The time is the autumn of 1866.

The 'El Dorado Restaurant and Saloon' was an hotel—every rubbishing bit of an eating-and-drinking shanty in the Very Far West is an hotel—which did a capital business, and was kept by one Alexander Macpherson, a taciturn, miserly old fellow of doubtful antecedents, with a sharp head on his shoulders and no principles worth speaking about, and who had passed many years in first one and then another gold-country. His 'help,' 'bar-keep,' and general factotum, was a young Englishman known in the old country, where he had been a male butterfly of society, as Hugh Mostyn, but familiarly spoken of among the rough miners, ever great at bestowing nicknames, as 'the cockney.' He had landed in the colony during the gold excitement of '62, short of money but rich in hope, firmly persuaded that he was going to make a fortune in a few months, had rapidly spent all he possessed, tried the callings of newspaper-boy, omnibus-driver, grocer's assistant, lessee of a cigar-store whose four previous owners had successively achieved bankruptcy, cook at the prison—the prisoners surviving!—and several other things; and had now for about a couple of months been servant to old Macpherson. And was only too thankful to have secured the situation. The wages, for that part of the world, were microscopic, for the keeper of the *El Dorado* passed himself off as a poor man. 'Nigh dead-broke,' was the expression he used.

How far this assertion was true, my story will show.

One day towards the end of September, while the mining season was still at its height, and when all things were at their busiest, Macpherson waked up in the little den behind the saloon, which was his sanctum and bed-room, prostrate and helpless, victim to a sharp attack of rheumatism. Touched at sight of the old man's pitiable condition, and also perhaps dreading lest death should ensue, and the business of which they were then, the barman felt convinced, making so thriving a concern, be broken up, [Hugh

exerted himself both to nurse his master and at the same time to attend to the restaurant.

In the afternoon, work having slackened, and the saloon being only half full of gamblers, loafers, hard-drinkers, and the like, Seth W. Jones lounged up to where Hugh stood behind the bar. Now, of all the people the latter knew in Nuggetville, this specimen of the 'honest miner' was the one he most cordially detested. And no wonder. For Seth Jones, a long, lean, lantern-jawed, ill-conditioned fellow, with his roving eyes set much nearer together in his head than any respectable man has a right to have them, always looked as if he had at least a dozen murders on his conscience, and would not at all have minded adding a dozen more.

Said Seth, who seldom wasted words, 'Boss sick?'

'Macpherson is laid up with rheumatism,' politely made answer Hugh, who dared not rebuff the man he feared.

'Guess I'll take a drink,' said the visitor, 'brandy straight' (i.e. 'neat'), and drank off the whole measure at a draught. It made not the slightest perceptible difference in him. He then leaned on the counter, hemmed the barman in, and set himself to extract everything in the way of information he could about Hugh himself, the amount of business done at the *El Dorado*, and the private affairs of the *El Dorado's* proprietor. Never had the Englishman been put under such stiff cross-examination; the 'down-easter' of fiction or fact was, in the matter of inquisitiveness, nothing to Seth W. Jones; but dread of the questioner and doubt of the motive for so much curiosity, made Hugh cautious in his replies. Indeed, of his master's private affairs he knew absolutely nothing. But Seth, who was 'cuteness itself,' read his victim as easily as an open book.

'That was a strange hint Jones dropt about old Sandie having a pile?' thought Hugh, as, after attending to his master's wants, he retreated to the saloon, and rolled himself up for the night in his blankets. But he was far too exhausted with his day's work to lie puzzling about the matter, so quickly fell asleep, nor stirred again till cock-crow. 'Could there have been any truth in it, I wonder?' he then said to himself, as he pursued the train of thought of the previous evening.

Seth's suggestion henceforth haunted him; and he furtively watched his employer as he had never before dreamed of doing. He took note of the fact that Macpherson, who in marvellously short time was well again and about, never 'loafed' from house to house, or claim to claim, or lazy group to lazy group, like other folks, nor cared to visit the Nuggetville theatre to cast upon the

stage at the feet of favourite actresses nuggets or ten or twenty dollar-pieces—the gold-miner's substantial substitute for the bouquets of civilisation—or haunted any place, in fact, save the *El Dorado* restaurant and saloon alone. Hugh remembered too that twice since he had entered the old man's service he had waked up in the middle of the night, and had seen shining through the cracks of the partition a faint light, and smelt a strong perfume of the national whisky; but not till Seth Jones had asked so many questions had this proceeding seemed to mean more than wakefulness and a secret indulgence in intoxicating liquors. Now, however, his curiosity was roused, and he set his wits to consider how best to construct a peep-hole through the slight partition of barely-closing, roughly-hewn boards.

On the morning following the conversation, as Hugh stooped behind the bar to roll up his night's blankets, he carefully examined his side of the partition, and perceived that one of the boards had, just where it joined the floor, a loose corner half split off. Could he but complete the fracture, there would be a hole large enough to give him, if he lay with his head upon the floor, a fairly good view into the den beyond. But how to complete it? Of Macpherson's presence there was no getting rid, and wood cannot be split without making a tell-tale noise. Once broken, nothing would be easier than to restore the irregular triangle to its place, trusting to chance for its non-observance on Sandie's side the division, and upon the other putting in front of it some one of the many light packages which stood behind the bar.

For several days Hugh watched his opportunity in vain. At length, late one evening, the *El Dorado* being full of miners, and the drinking and gambling at its height, there suddenly arose one of those hot-headed disputes over the cards which so frequently end in bloodshed. Two men were playing in a corner, when one of them sprang up, gave utterance to a torrent of oaths and accusations of unfair play, dashed his half of the pack full in the other's face, and clapped a hand behind him to draw forth his bowie-knife. Upon which the second man, rising too, whipped out his revolver, and fired, but merely grazed his adversary. At once the other miners hurried to the spot, and Macpherson, whom neither knife nor pistol ever scared, went forward to put a stop to the affray. The bar was thus left to Hugh alone; and, quick as thought, he dropped behind it, and, under cover of the din of voices and overturned furniture, tore out the triangular loose bit of wood, hastily replaced it, and moved against it a half-empty wooden case containing bottles of brandy packed in straw. All this was done in no more time than it takes to write of the

transaction; and when Hugh stood up again, the hubbub was not half over, and the interest in the gambling incident was still so keen that it looked as though no one, not even Seth W. Jones himself, had noticed the barman's apparently eccentric conduct.

When at last the evening had worn away, the saloon doors had been closed, and master and man had retired till the morrow, Hugh Mostyn had never felt more wide awake. He lay down in his accustomed corner, though not, as usual, to fall into the deep slumber which naturally follows a hard day's labour, but to wait till the faint light from Macpherson's den should shine through the cracks of the partition. When his employer had disappeared within his sanctum, and shot to the inside bolt, a never-failing signal that the old man had retired till morning, the young one at once pushed aside the half-empty case, so that, should he need to remove the triangular piece of wood, he could do so without trouble and without noise.

Within the den all was dark and quiet; and to impatient Hugh it now began to seem as though many long, tiresome hours were going past and as though nothing after all would happen. Still, he thought it well to reconnoitre a bit ere giving up hope for the night.

So he carefully removed the triangular peep-hole, but could see nothing; for although the rays from the recently risen, fast-waning moon rendered the saloon itself light with a pale, ghost-like gleam, the obscurity within Macpherson's room was in no wise relieved. He was just about to replace the piece of wood, and settle to sleep for what short portion of the night remained, when he was conscious of a faint noise within the den as of some one cautiously stirring. Hugh never moved a muscle, but lay with the wood grasped in his fingers, hardly daring to breathe or stir. By and by, Macpherson, apparently satisfied—for he had long ago found out his dependent to be a sound sleeper—put forth his hand, and slowly and carefully removed the shade of a covered lamp; for through the irregular crevices of the partition there shone, crack brightening after crack, the same faint radiance which, in the middle of the night, Hugh had already observed. And of course Macpherson was far too sharp to strike a match and thus risk making a noise that might have roused his man.

The lamp-shade being now removed, and the little den made fairly aglow with light, the old man listened attentively once more; and then noiselessly knelt down beside his rude couch. By and by, he rose again with two objects in his hands, one a broad leathern belt, the other a small leathern bag. And now there came into the old fellow's face a look such as in Hugh's sight it

had never worn before. As his aged hands, with trembling eagerness, untied the strings of the bag, and he dug his bony fingers in among the diamonds which filled it, there was in every feature an air of hungry greediness, of ghastly delight, that to the younger man would have seemed hateful, only that his own countenance, unconsciously perhaps, began to reflect an expression almost similar.

After awhile gazing at and toying with his treasure, Macpherson laid down the bag and took up the belt, and then with needle and thread, commenced patiently, slowly, and very carefully, to sew the precious stones into its soft lining. This was tedious work, partly because the old man's fingers found a housewife's implements not easy of management; partly because ever and anon he broke off from sewing to examine and caress some especially fine gem, or to feel lovingly through the lining the diamonds already securely fastened in; and partly because a dozen times at least he stayed his work to listen.

When this sort of thing had lasted a long while, Macpherson grew evidently wearied, he laid down needle and thread for the last time, gathered his materials together, knelt down, and fumbled once more about his bunk. Belt and bag returned to their hiding-place, and a bottle of whisky came forth instead. Very dearly did old Sandie love the national beverage, but he feared it too, for too much whisky is apt to loosen a man's tongue, and will at times make a fool of even the wisest. Therefore, for all that he looked so lovingly, he hesitated too, held the bottle up to see how much it contained, put it back twice, took it out again, placed it to his lips, and drank.

'If,' thought the eager watcher, 'he would but get screwed now, and knock that lamp over, perhaps the whole building might get in a blaze, and then ——'

But no; Macpherson was no fool; he took only such a draught as seemed safe, hid away his bottle, turned out his lamp, and once more the *El Dorado* was plunged into the darkness of night.

He slept: not so his man. Everlastingly the sheen of diamonds was before envious Hugh's eyes, while calculations as to their probable value perplexed his brain. These precious stones were evidently the hoard of many years, since in a mining country whenever a saving man, a product rare enough, is found, it is his practice, if he keeps no banking account, to change his gold-dust into the more readily portable diamonds. And here were gems actually by the score together. If only all that treasure were his own, Hugh thought, how easily he could return to England in the character of a lucky miner, become for the rest of his days a

prosperous man, and hold up his head among the proudest of that moneyed class who make fortunes heaven knows how!

For several successive nights Hugh watched as long as he could keep awake, and during some part of most of them his perseverance was rewarded by the sight of Macpherson again bending over his leathern belt, and slowly and patiently sewing his diamonds into its soft lining. 'How can the old man do with so little sleep night after night, and yet in the morning show not a trace of weariness?' thought Hugh, who felt himself growing haggard for want of rest. He forgot to take into consideration the fact that he often wasted hours in fruitless watching, while Sandie, self-trained by long habit to wake at one particular time, wisely economised his strength by passing the remainder of the night in steady slumber.

The leathern bag was gradually becoming empty and the belt as gradually growing thick with secreted wealth of gems; and meanwhile the mining season drew towards its close. Could it be that the old man—fearful of incurring in the speedily approaching winter fresh and sharper attacks of rheumatism, and perhaps also uneasy on account of Seth Jones's perfectly audible hints and curious questionings—was minded to slip off from Nuggetville, and leave restaurant and dependent too to fare as they might? That was quite possible, for the value of the stock in trade and building was as nothing in comparison with that of the precious stones.

Another night came, and poor Hugh, wofully tired, with eyes blood-shot for want of sleep, and yet, thanks to the fascination of his watch, intensely wakeful, witnessed through his peep-hole the usual programme of the *El Dorado's* midnight entertainment—the usual programme, that is, with for once a totally different ending.

While he lay with his aching eyes fixed upon his master's bowed figure sewing as patiently and slowly as ever, he felt that sleep was about to conquer him at last. The gems still continued to dazzle, but the den with its solitary inmate began to recede and grow indistinct, until somehow the scene was changed to Hugh's old home in far away England, and it was Sir Lewis Mostyn, his little-loved elder brother, who bent over the leathern belt and sewed into it the precious stones. And by and by there glided in a form like the wife Hugh had left behind in England, richly attired, radiant, beautiful, wearing a necklace of the largest and finest of the diamonds, and carrying in her arms their child; and she took the belt from her brother-in-law's unwilling fingers, and said, 'It is all ours now, and nothing shall be left to you, hard-hearted old man that you are.' For by some means Sir Lewis had

become aged and withered, and altogether the living image of Macpherson the miser. Then, as Hugh's wife bound the belt about her body, there burst over all the scene a golden radiance, a ruddy glare that filled the place with light, and again she spoke and said, 'Yes, it is all ours now, nothing is left to you, and Mostyn Hall is on fire, on fire, on fire!' And the aged Sir Lewis, with trembling lips, like a faint echo, repeated after her 'on fire!' Then the ruddy glare grew fiercer, and there were heard distant sounds as of roaring flames and crashing timbers and shouts of 'fire! fire! fire!' which ever came nearer and nearer. And Hugh, jumping upright with a loud cry and wide awake, saw the radiance he had dreamed of shining brilliantly through the windows of the *El Dorado*, and making the black night glaringly red.

His first thought was that Macpherson had at last upset his lamp, and set the den in a blaze; but a glance through the peephole showed things all right in that direction, and Sandie, fully alive to the situation as far as it concerned himself, noiselessly and with wonderful celerity divesting himself of his upper strata of clothing, buckling on his belt, replacing his coat, &c., and, last of all, girding on his brace of trusty seven-shooters. The roar of whirling flames, the shouts of men, and din of falling timbers grew louder, wilder, nearer, and Hugh, aware that he ought to be doing something, fell to battering at the sanctum's bolted door, the while he excitedly cried, 'Macpherson, awake, get up! Would you die like a dog, man? Nuggetville's on fire!'

'All right,' returned the cool, self-possessed voice within. 'Have yer never seen a mining city burnt up before, that yer shout and yell like an insane greaser driving mules into a corral? I guess we ain't got no kegs o' gunpowder on the restaurant, nor they hasn't next door neither. Tak' up yer blankets and stow into them and into yer pockets as many bottles o' whisky as yer kin; and I reckon we'll make tracks right away.'

So saying he issued from the den, and the two men unbarred the house door and escaped.

The *El Dorado* perished, of course; indeed, the whole of Nuggetville was laid low, save one tiny shanty that stood rather apart from the rest. But what matters the destruction of an entire city which can be easily rebuilt in a few days?

'Ye're mighty civil to an old man, Hugh,' said Macpherson, as they stepped out into the open air; 'why didn't yer leave me aged carcase to burn up 'long with the restaurant? I guess I ain't much worth saving, noheow.' And he looked suspiciously into his companion's face, brightly lighted up as it was by the huge fire.

‘That would have been inhuman,’ answered the barman, without flinching.

A wooden town wholly on fire is always a magnificent spectacle, and Nuggetville formed no exception to the rule. The flames, driving fast before a powerful wind, leapt from wooden house to wooden house with amazing celerity; and the logs, or boards, of which each building was composed, baked by the hot sun of a long summer, blazed as readily as paper. Of course the Nuggetvillians, like all miners, enjoyed the big bonfire immensely; the question who’s to lose or who’s to pay being to them never an especially serious one.

A drizzling rain was now beginning to fall, and the dull, grey, autumnal dawn, contending with the lurid light of the flames, made the scene of destruction look desolate enough. Hugh, feeling first the chill—his companion was wrapped in cogitation as to whether it would not be well to set off for the south at once, taking his servant with him as a protection—shivered, and turning suddenly to old Sandie, clapped him on the shoulder and said, ‘Macpherson, this will never suit your rheumatism; had we not better make a move somewhere?’

Recalled so speedily from the land of thought, the old man was for once thrown off his guard; it was not often in his long life that anyone had succeeded in startling him; but he started and visibly shrank from the hand laid on him at that moment. ‘Ay, laddie,’ he said, in the Scotch accent that returned naturally to his lips at such rare times; then added, in his usual nasal twang, ‘wal, hurry up! We’d best make tracks, anyheow. Nuggetville’s played out this fall, but I reckon as Orofield ain’t caved in yet.’

He said nothing of his resolve to move on far beyond Orofield and beyond the colony’s limits; but Hugh took the ‘we’ of his master’s speech to mean that they were to set off together; nor, indeed, had the barman the slightest wish to part company with the jewel-lined belt that lay so near his hand. Once more the thought flashed through his brain, ‘did the old fellow come honestly by all that treasure? Why, he drew back from my touch as though my hand had been that of a detective!’ But aloud he only said, ‘All right, what you will.’

And thus the two men, their blankets on their shoulders, their weapons close to hand, commenced their long pedestrian journey.

And where all this while was Seth W. Jones? In the very place he might be expected to be found: in the interior of the deserted *El Dorado*, whose roof had already caught fire; he was employed in carefully investigating that to him most interesting of

spots. He knew exactly how long it was safe to remain—not many minutes; for if common rumour spoke truthfully he had had in his time a good deal to do with conflagrations, not at all in the way of putting them out, but rather in the character—by no means unknown in the remote West—of incendiary. Now, when the two other men had slipped out of the doomed ‘restaurant and saloon,’ Jones, who, as usual, was wide awake and up and not far off, after watching them safely from the premises, had quietly slipped in, and passed straight to Macpherson’s den.

A blow or two from the miner’s axe Seth carried had soon battered down the door, which, even in the hurry of flight, the old man had not failed to lock behind him; and then, undaunted by the smoke already thinly curling into the room, the spy stood before the sleeping-place, close beside which was the small round table with the extinguished lamp upon it. But nothing tell-tale remained; either from force of habit or with intention of rendering security doubly sure, Sandie had carefully put back his sewing implements into their hiding-place, and there only rested outside it the three-quarters emptied bottle of whisky, which Seth speedily reduced to total emptiness.

Pah! how the smoke began to choke him! There was no time to lose; clear out he must, yes, and clear out too without having discovered a clue to the secret hoard he felt so sure, from his intimate acquaintance with the ways of gold-mining people, the old man must possess. Ah! what was that tiny speck upon the floor there, shining so brightly in the ghostly dawn stealing past him through the broken door? A diamond, by all that’s lucky!

For a second or two it lay in Seth’s claw-like hand; he fingered it with greedy exultation; he looked remarkably like the orthodox pictorial fiend or melodramatic stage-ruffian, only that he neither talked blank verse, nor stamped, shook, gesticulated, or otherwise wasted time and energy; and then, since all was fish that came to his net—and this was splendid fish indeed—he thrust into a safe pocket the one gem which, thanks to Sandie’s failing eyesight, had been inadvertently left behind. Here was a clue at last, a clue to the whole; for had Macpherson possessed but a single diamond, ay, or but a few such specimens, would he have allowed that one to remain lying there?

Then, with a parting anathema on the suffocating smoke that forbad further exploration of the place, Seth Jones passed out of the fast-burning *El Dorado*, and set forth to find the man who owned the treasure.

Nuggetville had long ceased to blaze, and Orofield had been

left many miles behind, when the sun shone one windy day upon the shabby figures of Sandie Macpherson and Hugh Mostyn plodding steadily on together southward. At Orofield the master had made no stay to speak of; the fiat had again gone forth that 'we' were to 'make tracks,' and Hugh, of course, had raised no dissentient voice. He little knew the elder man intended his escort to accompany him only as far as Yale upon the Fraser; and that if the younger should choose to proceed farther than that head of steam-navigation—beyond which there was no likelihood of loneliness and consequent fears for the safety of the treasure—he must shift as best he might. Hugh never thought of earthly thing save of the diamond belt; he paced along by Sandie's side like one in a dream, lost in a maze of perplexity. All, truly very little, that he had thus far been able to accomplish in the way of obtaining possession of the diamonds was the making two or three ridiculously feeble and utterly fruitless attempts to get his companion into a state of intoxication, in the belief that, once drunk, plunder of Sandie's person would become an easy matter. But the old man was far too 'cute to be thrown off his guard at such a time as the present; nor dared Hugh risk all by showing his hand too plainly or too soon. In only a few more days the travellers must arrive at the port of embarkation; and from that place, as Hugh well knew, the chances of getting at the diamond belt would be all but gone.

What was to be done?

Sometimes that fickle goddess whom men call Fortune will choose the very moment when our prospects are at their gloomiest to set her face once more in our direction; and our better luck will spring from an apparently trivial incident. Indirectly, then, it was to so prosaic an article as one of his own boots that Hugh owed the winning of the great prize. Worn and patched and shabby at first starting, these had been getting more and more disreputable every mile of the long way, until at length the sole of one parted from the upper leathers, and Hugh's stockingless foot came into contact with the rough pebbly road.

'Look,' he said, breaking the silence of an hour's duration, 'I must tie this on to my boot with my handkerchief. Let us stop for a minute.'

'All right,' growled ancient Sandie, and down they sat, Hugh to bind up his boot and its loose sole in the best fashion that he could, Macpherson to keep his eyes on the road to northward—northward where lay the mining cities they had left behind them, and whence any who should think it worth while to follow them must come.

And above and around them meantime swayed and sighed the giant pines bending before the influence of the autumnal blast.

‘How it blows,’ said Hugh, conversationally inclined. ‘I should say it was heavy weather out at sea.’

‘Ay, it storms some,’ returned his laconic master. And then grumblingly added, ‘Ain’t you fixed that ar boot yet?’

Boughs and branches snapped here and there, making suspiciously startling noises all around; but the old man recked little of them. From the place whereon he sat he commanded an excellent view of the long road which in the distance looked like a mere white thread between the two separate, dense masses of tall trees; and as far as eye could see, descried nothing that should make him uneasy. Though, had he riveted his gaze, not upon the lonely road, but the bush behind him, he would, indeed, have discovered grave cause for fear.

The day before our travellers arrived upon this spot, a passing party of Indians had bivouacked in the forest a few yards off the road, and upon quitting the ground had carelessly left their fire to take care of itself. A slight breeze, precursor of to-day’s tearing wind, had been blowing at the time, and the fire, accommodating itself kindly to the situation, had spread over the space of several yards, and then died out again. But, as is so often the case, the flames, ere expiring, had wrapped round the base of some of the huge pine-trunks, finding in their resinous bark a congenial stimulant, and had burnt a large portion of them away, one in especial nearly through, leaving intact the upper two hundred feet or so of ponderous stem and boughs and leaves.

And the wind that day was a gale.

Hugh, having bound up his dilapidated boot, was rising to his feet, and old Sandie had pulled himself up by aid of his formidable-looking staff, life-preserver as well as support, when there came a terrific crash from the bush behind them, and in a second of time both men were felled, helpless as ninepins, to the earth.

After a while the younger, who had only been rendered insensible by a projecting arm of the prostrate leafy giant, rose once more, dazed and aching, and barely able to understand what had happened. Across the road stretched a huge pine, and underneath it, frightfully crushed and quite dead, lay Alexander Macpherson. At first Hugh was so shocked that, as he crept to his motionless companion’s side, some good impulse caused him almost to hope he should not find him killed. Yet, had the old man been still alive, renewal of former perplexities and longings must infallibly have taken the place of more transient better feeling.

When after some hesitation, cut short chiefly through dread

lest anyone should pass, and his opportunity be lost, he had loosened Macpherson's clothing as well as he could get at it, he found it an easy task enough to draw the belt away from the body. But as he bound the much coveted treasure about his waist and underneath his loose, well-worn garibaldi, there was in his heart no room for exultation, but only for shuddering horror.

The belt once girded on, he cast a long, nervous glance both to north and south, to his intense relief ascertaining that no human being was in sight, then turned and fled the spot, nor stopped till he had put many miles between himself and the scene of disaster. Then, utterly wearied out, he went aside among the trees a few paces from the high road, sank down and slept he knew not how long.

When, with a great start of dread, he awoke, the moon was shining brightly ; it was a beautifully clear night, and the wind had almost lulled. He regained the road, looked eagerly to north and south, and trudged on once more. He was rested now, and could collect his wits, and decide upon the best course of action. To push on with as little loss of time as possible was evidently the first thing to be done. All other ideas were as yet necessarily vague.

On he tramped, till at last the lighted windows of a rude way-side hotel caused him to stop short. He was very hungry ; dared he go in and have a meal ? But what if anyone should be there who, coming from the mines, had passed the fallen giant of the woods while he lay sleeping, and, by way of latest news, had told an ugly tale to the house's inmates about a crushed corpse (evidently despoiled, too) lying beneath the tree ? Ah, fool, why, ere leaving that fatal spot, had he not thought to cover the body over ? There had been round about the place plenty of boughs and leaves and faded fern and bracken ; and the dead man lay just off the road. Had he but been more careful, he might have made all safe ; for who in the wide world would have missed ancient Sandie, or have taken the trouble to look for him ?

He stole up to one of the two uncurtained windows of the house ; and very cautiously peeped through. Within was a long, rough room, and in front of the bright log fire that lighted it far more cheerfully and effectually than did the single feeble candle standing on the table, sat two men, one, Sefton by name, whom Hugh knew to be the master of the shanty.

The other was Seth W. Jones.

At sight of the ill-looking fellow, Hugh felt all his old antipathy revive with tenfold vigour, together with a new, an instinctive *dread for the safety of his treasure*. He turned away : he dared not

go in; he resisted the strong craving he felt for the rough food laid out upon the table, and so pushed on again. The next roadside house might, he judged, be reached soon after daybreak, and there most certainly he would rest. He was all the more anxious to be moving as he noticed that Seth was sitting with both his boots off, one of which he held in his hand, and seemed to be engaged very carefully and slowly in mending.

'That,' reasoned Hugh, 'looks as though he had made up his mind to stop, therefore I will get a good start of him.' And then with a sudden pang of fear, which caused him to clasp the diamond belt closer, the thought crossed him, 'Can he be waiting for me?'

That was precisely what Seth Jones was doing.

Footsore, weary, and very hungry, Hugh Mostyn strode on through all the night. Many times he had to stop to bind his fast-perishing boots together; and once or twice he stooped to drink at rills and water-holes. And still the dense and dismal pine forest bounding the lonely road on either side rose up, mile after mile, hour after hour, looking in the waning moonlight like a gloomy prison wall. In every darker mass his disordered fancy beheld an ambuscade of prowling aborigines, or yet more treacherous whites: if a bough cracked or fell, he dreaded to see a grizzly cross his path or offer to dispute it; and wherever the track lay deepest in shadow he trod in fear, because there came back recollection of sundry stories he had heard of rattle-snakes, those deadliest of venomous reptiles.

But neither accident nor misadventure befell the weary pedestrian, and the late autumnal morning had broken some little while when he came in sight of the next wayside house. Yet when he had all but reached the door he felt afraid to enter. Might not the place be full of miners returning southward now the mining-season was at its close, among them men who must have left Nuggetville but a short time ago, perhaps since his own departure, and who may have known him there? Thus, should he enter in quest of breakfast, might not some one of the company thereat assembled ask after the old man who quitted the burnt-out city with him; and if so, what kind of answer should he give? With ancient Sandie's 'pile' about his waist, he felt as though he were responsible for his master's disappearance, and dreaded lest murder should be laid to his charge. He pictured himself being cross-examined by a knot of the shrewd, hard-headed miners now *perhaps* collected within the house before him, now *perhaps* even *discussing* the strange incident of the fallen tree and the crushed *trunk*; of Seth Jones, in the very midst of matters, entering dra-

matically on the scene, and gladly serving as accuser and 'chief witness; he thought of all the wild, extraordinary tales he had ever heard of lynch law as administered in rough mining countries, and wondered which of the trees around him might perchance become his gibbet.

'Oh, that there were an end to all this trouble! Would I were safe again in England!' groaned the wretched vagrant, as, weary in body and soul, and faint with hunger, he leaned against a pine stem that hid him from observation, and reckoned up the chances that stood between him and a breakfast.

Hunger decided the point; he entered the shanty, and found it indeed full of miners, but at the first glance beheld no face that seemed familiar. He made a hearty breakfast, and even managed to stow away a good deal of food in his pocket besides, as he deemed it the better course to keep out of wayside houses as often as circumstances would allow. And conjecture became conviction when, while engaged in outward calm but inward trepidation in consuming the meal, he heard some of the men discussing the very subject he so dreaded.

'Whar was the "cockney" then?' asked one; and Hugh grew more uncomfortable than before. He stole a look from under the rim of his sombrero at the speaker, and inwardly blessed the Far Western custom of wearing the head covered with a well-slouched hat upon all possible occasions.

The man who had spoken was Abner B. Choate, a 'lucky miner' of Nuggetville; but his was the only face Hugh recognised. 'Ah,' thought the anxious ex-barman, 'you were still on the creek when I left, and you must have passed that tree while I, like a fool, lay losing time in sleep.'

'Old Mac and the cockney made tracks together,' went on Abner Choate. 'Yer see, boys, Nuggetville pretty nigh caved in for this fall when it burnt up, though they deu say as Mac hed made his pile long afore that time.'

'Injuns might hev stripped the body,' suggested a greenhorn newly come to that part of the world.

'Oh, my, yes, likely!' exclaimed Abner Choate derisively. 'Say, stranger, whar was you raised? Not in a wooden nutmeg State, noheow, I guess.'

But Hugh had heard as much as he cared to hear. He paid for his breakfast with some of poor Macpherson's money, slipped out of the house, and, full of nervous apprehension, hurriedly pushed on once more. How many days, he asked himself, would bring him now to Yale? Ah, but suppose the news about old Sandie had travelled there already? Suppose he should be kept waiting there a

day or two for the next steamer? A day or two: and with Jones, Choate, and Nemesis meanwhile stalking close at his heels! Torturing thought! But no, he would avoid that pitfall. Once arrived at the river banks, he would, from some one of the Indian villages there, charter a canoe, and, propelled by sturdy, practised, aboriginal arms, float safely down the terribly swift and dangerous Fraser, pass Yale without stopping at it, and paddle on, on to the capital itself. Courage! All yet was safe.

When the footsore traveller had reached a part where the road turned a corner, he looked back at the house, lying now at the distance of some few hundred yards. A figure stood at the door, and plainly to be seen behind it were other figures gathering on the threshold. Was it Choate, and was he organising a chase after the supposed fugitive from justice; and was the 'honest miner' boiling over with virtuous indignation mingled with natural disappointment at the prospect of a felon escaping the gentle amenities of lynch law, or were he and those with him simply bidding their host farewell? Who could tell? Not Hugh. He turned the corner, and at once his shambling gait changed into a swift run.

Now running, now walking, now limping painfully, he never stopped till he had put several miles between himself and that wayside house, and till one of his dilapidated boots had left his foot entirely. He stooped to gather up the poor remains, and, still haunted by the idea that he was followed, retired, spite of snakes or grizzlies, well within the bush again to bind up the leathers as best he could. The old handkerchief had quite given out, but a few long strips torn by aid of his knife from his blanket proved a far more efficient protection against the tortures of stony road or thorny brake, and he was soon ready to start again.

Hush! was that a footstep that went past upon the road? His heart beat fast. If only he dared peer forth to look! He stole near enough to the road to see through a leafy ambush, but not a creature was in sight. The footstep could have existed only in imagination. At the rate at which, since leaving that wayside house, he had progressed, it was hardly likely that anyone could have caught him up. Unless—again in mind he reverted to Seth W. Jones. How he hated that murderous-looking fellow, and how much those broad hints he used to drop about Macpherson's hoard seemed as though he knew all about the matter. Could it be that Seth was tracking him down? On the whole it would be safer, Hugh decided, to keep for a while to the bush. Snakes and *zlies* were objectionable enough, but Seth was simply odious.

The forest here was not very dense ; he would keep in the vicinity of the road—if possible, where he could still get an occasional glimpse at it.

Much easier said or thought than done. When he had tried an hour or so of this slower mode of progression—for oftentimes a denser thicket had to be traversed or avoided—he found that he no longer at intervals caught sight of the highway ; and when, fearful of losing it altogether and getting bushed, he attempted to walk straight in the direction in which he felt sure it ought to lie, he only entangled himself further and further in the gigantic maze. He stopped ; he listened with all his might, hoping he should hear the distant murmur of the brawling, rapid Fraser, which he fancied could not be far off ; but instead caught only the beating of his own dismayed heart.

There is something awfully silent in those dense pine forests ; the soft songs and lively twitterings of tiny song birds which make gay our own brighter-foliaged English woods are rarely enough heard there, and the twilight gloom cast by closely-growing trees, whose tops are often two hundred feet above the ground, is singularly depressing. Hugh gazed in every direction, striving to find an old trail or blazed trees somewhere, and all in vain. He looked upward to see if he could catch any tiny flecks of travelling sunlight, so that by watching which way they went he might make out the bearings ; but the ‘ monarch of day ’ was now low down in the horizon, and the tiny sunflecks would travel no more till the morrow. Then he grew terribly frightened, and a wild prayer for help burst from his pale lips. Then he had recourse to his brandy flask, sole relic of that liquor which had been saved from the burning *El Dorado* ; and next, being wofully hungry again, he consumed the greater part of the food he had secreted in the morning. By the time his hasty meal was ended, he saw that darkness was coming on apace, and he knew he must find nocturnal quarters. He scaled a convenient tree, and, tying himself securely into a fork of it, slept soundly, spite of all his terrors. Perhaps the bodily fatigue he had so long endured overpowered him ; perhaps the strong dose of brandy he had taken was working on his brain.

When he awoke, the sun (although he saw it not) was high ; he remembered the terrible strait he was in, and remembered also with a sort of incredulous wonder—it seemed so long ago—that but two days before he and Sandie Macpherson had been trudging side by side. The good night’s rest he had had caused his spirits to revive ; if he were indeed bushed, he had at least escaped his *skulking foe* : Seth Jones must be far away. So Hugh consumed

the rest of his food ; what mattered exhausting the scanty supply ? he should certainly regain the lost road to-day ; and then he would put on a bold front, and replenish his stomach and his pocket too at the first wayside house he came to.

Ah, would he ? When he had wandered helplessly, distractedly, at times deliriously for two days longer, he asked himself in despair should he ever see that road again, ever look more into the faces of his fellow-men ?

On that, the third day since entering the bush, he sat, oh, how famished, how desperate, and wondered what the end would be. Here, with an ample fortune girt around his body, he was slowly starving to death. Not all the diamonds in a mass could avail to purchase him even one little crust of bread. In rags, barefoot, he sat and shivered ; barefoot, in rags, and with a zone of costly gems about his waist.

Ah, the horrible ending to all his hopes ! Should he wander on in that huge, silent, twilight wilderness, wander till madness overtook him, wander till he died ? And life just now so sweet, so well worth keeping ; life which, for the first time in all his chequered existence, meant a future of wealth and ease, meant, in a word, the diamonds ! Was he going mad already ? And did the gloomy pines, erewhile so still, wave their long arms towards him mockingly ; or was it but a trick of his disordered fancy ? ‘ Oh, help, help, help ! ’ shrieked Hugh, in his agony ; and there was none to help, nor echo even to answer his cry of desolation.

Great Heaven ! what was that object lying there—there, barely hidden by the undergrowth, not half-a-dozen steps away ? A pair of boots, a heap of mouldy-looking ragged-clothes, and within the rags a ghastly skeleton ! Poor remnant of mortality, did you too, while living, lose yourself in the bush, only to perish of hunger and fatigue ? Hardly so, if a frightful fracture of the frontal bones might be taken as evidence of an end quicker certainly, yet scarcely less horrible.

Carefully, though with a shrinking loathing, Hugh examined about the waist and in the pockets of the poor unknown, but found no treasure—if any had ever been there, the hand which murdered had taken it—only in a side-pocket, well wrapped up, a small packet of the mouldiest biscuits the finder had ever seen. Two days ago he would have shrunk in abhorrence from such relics ; now he devoured them ravenously. A few steps farther on, he saw a flask upon the ground ; it was full of brandy, and he drank a portion of it eagerly. Once more hope revived ; he returned to the corpse ; he drew off the long miner’s boots, not without another shudder, shook and rubbed them, then put them

on, and proceeded to reconnoitre the surroundings. In thought he said, 'The man was murdered, robbed, dragged in here, and left. The road, then, cannot be far off; and if I but take pains enough, I may find it again.'

Here and there he broke a branch down, beheaded a sapling, or clipped the bark of a young tree, by way of blazing something of a trail; for he must not lose sight of that lonely skeleton which, till the high-road was found, must serve as centre whence to radiate or return. And thus slowly and cautiously he went to work, getting wrong oftentimes, and more than once losing centre, blazed trail and all.

At length he stumbled on an old crushed sombrero. Then he felt certain he was on a right track, and still more cautiously and slowly groped along until he came upon a rusted bowie-knife, and then quite suddenly it seemed to his fancy as if the branches of a maple raised themselves to give him the sight, the welcome sight, of a tiny, irregular triangle of dusty road. Oh, joy! he rubbed his eyes, and looked again; it was no dream, it was indeed the road, and as he pushed past the maple, a long slanting ray of sunlight streamed over him. Then straightway he fell to the ground, and sobbed like a weakly child overcome by hysteria.

After a while, scarce knowing what he did, he stepped out into the blessed sunshine which for three days of twilight darkness he had not seen, and held up both hands towards the clear strip of azure blue above his head which seemed to the freshly liberated man like a refreshing balm. Then, with the old, half-forgotten dread once more upon him, he shrank back into the shadow, peeped cautiously to north and south, and listened for the sound of approaching footsteps. No one was in sight, no one was within sound; he passed out into the open, and became again a solitary moving figure upon a lonely road. Yes, he was rescued from the bush, he was onward bound, he was re-shod after a fashion, and the brandy had revived him. But, ah, ominous but! he had lost three days of valuable time, and where now was Abner Choate? Where, too, the man he feared?

The sunset glow had not quite left the sky when, after some miles of walking, Hugh found himself in sight of another wayside house. By this time he was so weary and famished, that he resolved to stop, to have a real 'square' meal, and get a good night's rest. He recognised the place, and reckoned it at a single day's tramp from the spot where three days previously he had turned out of the highway into the bush. This was the fourth evening since that when, through a window, he had beheld Seth Jones *within Sefton's house*, and Sefton's lay back close upon a

couple of days' walk from here. Now, if from Sefton's Seth Jones had gone on all right—as why should he not?—he must be two days ahead of Hugh upon the journey; whilst Abner Choate and his set would be even farther. Obviously then, as far as regarded intended avoidance of these men, it was perfectly safe for him to stop here. As far as regarded chance meeting with others whom he knew, he felt by this time so ragged and disreputable—as, in greater or lesser degree, all miners, after their long tramp, outwardly become—that he was already sufficiently disguised.

And so he quietly stole in at the door.

The rough room shone only with the ruddy glare from a blazing log-fire; the host not having yet seen fit otherwise to light up the place. Round about the centre table lounged, smoked, and expectorated a dozen miners bound south, but resting there till morning; and bending over the fire, his face and figure brought out only too unmistakably by the glow in front of him, sat Seth W. Jones.

At sight of him, Hugh's heart seemed to stop beating, and instinctively he slunk into the darkest corner he could find, earnestly hoping the other had not perceived him. His hope was vain; Seth—who, under pretence of a sprained ankle, had remained two days in this place because, thanks to judiciously-worded enquiries, he had found out that between this and the house next below Sefton's no one at all answering Hugh's description had been seen—kept his roving eyes upon every person who entered or departed; and at once recognised the man of whom he was in pursuit.

Now Seth, on arrival at the fallen tree, had paused and sat down on it. Forty-nine out of fifty of the 'boys' who had come abreast with the obstacle had merely climbed over and passed on; but Seth was just the fiftieth man who always has ideas of his own. All his wits were about him, and they had speedily noticed a heavy-looking staff close beside the prostrate pine. Now, everybody knows that the bush does not grow polished walking-sticks. 'I guess you'll be some sorter use,' said Seth, picking up and approvingly regarding his new acquisition, 'and what's more, I've a kinder notion as I've seen yer somewhar already.'

He had soon found the mangled corpse; and then the matter became plain at once. A dead body with its clothes loosened about the waist (Seth knew well enough what *that* meant), nothing apparently save the money from the pocket taken, even the seven-shooter, even the flask of spirits left. Master dead, man gone; Macpherson here, Hugh Mostyn—where? Very carefully, with *whatever* lay handiest, did Seth cover up the fast-stiffening clay;

he was not the man to leave tell-tale relics unconcealed when concealment might be useful; and then he had turned his face to southward, bent now upon tracking down the old man's companion.

And barely an hour later, Abner Choate, with a handful of his fellow-miners, also came to the fallen tree; and being likewise of enquiring mind, investigated the place, and found the body too; so that Seth's efforts at hiding were quite thrown away. Thus even the shrewdest people may at times waste precious moments.

And now Seth beheld his intended victim close at hand.

Supper not being yet upon the table, Hugh employed the interval in desperately considering his best course. Unless Jones were publicly to denounce him as a fit subject for lynch law, Hugh knew that among so many he was safe. Would it be well to-morrow to wait till the other men started, and pursue his journey protected by companionship? But suppose some of these were Seth's accomplices? That was a fatal error of judgment on Hugh's part; his enemy was the last man in the world to have accomplices and be forced to share the booty he coveted for himself alone.

Supper over, drinking and gambling became the order of the evening; but at last one by one each man rolled himself up in his blanket, and lay down on the floor to sleep.

Craving for stimulants with which to sustain his sinking courage, Hugh drank, though not too deeply, for safety required that his head should be kept clear. And ere long, he too lay down with the rest. Seth Jones crouched in front of the fire; that being the place of honour accorded the 'sick' man. The landlord's bed was of course the bar. Ere settling finally for the night, Hugh leaned for an instant on his elbow, to steal a glance at his foe across the recumbent forms about him. Seth, too, was leaning on his elbow to look towards Hugh. The glances of the two men met; and Hugh read murder in the other's evil countenance. Then the ex-barman sank down, but not to sleep. Wearied as he was, he could not close his eyes; nor was it till the night was far spent that he was able to catch even fitful snatches of slumber haunted by frightful dreams.

When for the last time he rose, the sun was up, and most of the miners were astir, though Seth, coiled up in his blanket, still lay like one asleep. The landlord was out of sight on the back premises, preparing the breakfast and getting wood to replenish the freshly kindled fire.

'Now or never,' thought Hugh, 'is my time to escape,' and *stole out of the door.* As he crossed the threshold he cast a hurried

glance at Seth's blanket-clothed figure. But it did not stir till Hugh had passed out of sight.

On went the fugitive, as briskly as his footsore condition would allow; and after him, but far more briskly, seeing that he had been refreshed with three good days of rest, sped Seth Jones, till between both men and the shanty full of breakfasting miners there had been put a long, a judicious distance, a distance well beyond the hearing of pistol shots or shrieks for help. And then, as he fled, Hugh began to perceive that, hasten as he might, a swiftly moving form behind little by little steadily gained upon him. Should Seth possess his treasure? Never while he had strength to defend it. If only he had robbed Macpherson of the revolvers when he robbed him of the diamonds, Hugh would have turned at bay, and shot down the pursuer like a dog. But his bowie was the sole weapon he possessed. Knowing then that if he remained in sight, his life would speedily be forfeit, he dashed into the bush, and hid himself among the dense undergrowth. And while he crouched and listened breathlessly, there came, at first far-off and indistinct, though ever growing louder, a jingle of horses' bells. Oh, blessed sound that seemed to promise speedy succour! He rose from his leafy shelter, he thrust himself excitedly forward, he shouted loud and wildly for help; and the next instant was laid low by a bullet from Seth's unerring hand.

For a moment, the villain, now stooping over his prostrate victim, hesitated as he listened to the rapid tramp of horses' feet, and the roll of fast approaching wheels, but hesitated for a moment only. He knew well the windings of that road, following, as it did, the brawling river's bank, and he noted with satisfaction the density of the bush close at hand. There was just time to do all he wanted; the would-be rescuers had not yet reached yonder convenient, sharply-turning corner. Hugh lay still enough, there was no more resistance there. So Seth tore the ragged clothes apart, and, with help of his ready bowie-knife, ripped off the diamond belt, and disappeared into the forest just as the heads of a couple of horses rounded the corner. Behind the galloping steeds were seen two men, old acquaintances of Hugh's, and fellow-passengers on the outward journey four years previously; the one a briefless barrister, and the other a medical student, in the old country; and, in the new, long since set up together as 'packers' between Yale and Cariboo. But Hugh saw them not; his eyes were closed, and he lay as one dead. Yet when Tyrrel and Montgomery had raised and placed him in their wagon, they found life not yet extinct, and Montgomery's surgical skill availed to save it. The two new arrivals had caught sight of the would-be

murderer as he vanished into the bush; and Tyrrell, leaving the wounded man in his friend's care, plunged into the leafy covert in pursuit. Vain quest! for Seth was speedily only too well hidden from mortal eyes. Forgetting a bushman's usual caution in dread lest the precious belt should be wrested from his grasp, the villain penetrated too deeply within that bewildering maze which so rarely yields up its once caged inmates, and never came forth again.

Thus diamonds and thief alike were lost.

E. C. FELLOWS.

Donna Quixote.

BY JUSTIN MCCARTHY.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LODGERS IN BOLINGBROKE PLACE.

GABRIELLE followed Mrs. Charlton up the stairs; but for the moment she was not thinking either of Janet or of her own purpose in coming to Janet's house. She was strangely impressed by the demeanour and the words of the odd young man she had seen on the staircase, and whom she at once identified in her own mind with the 'real gentleman' whom Janet had described to her, and concerning whom Mr. Charlton might possibly have been disposed to make himself foolishly uneasy. He seemed a gentleman, certainly, Gabrielle thought, although there was something abrupt and *sans gêne* in his manner that she did not like. But it was not his abruptness that impressed her especially; it was the manner in which he had gone over her name as if it affected him with some strange associations. Those who follow Gabrielle Vanthorpe's story will not be long in finding out that she was a young woman of a very lively imagination, marvellously ready to form impressions, jump to conclusions, and endow the fantasies of her own mind with flesh-and-blood reality. Even as she mounted the stairs to Janet's room, she was already wondering whether it might not be possible that the destinies had, at the very outset of her career of active beneficence, thrown her on the track of a discovery which was very near her heart, but had seemed far away from her hopes.

She was somewhat surprised when she saw Mr. Charlton. He was quite unlike what she had expected to see. This was a weakness on her part. She ought to have known that he would be unlike what she naturally expected to see. Everybody ought by this time to have mastered the physiological truth that the furious fanatic is certain to have the gentlest and sweetest manners; that the uncompromising atheist is one whose whole appearance suggests only devotional fervour; that the remorseless tyrant will have the complexion, the curls, and the hands of a girl; and so forth. Gabrielle expected, when she heard of Mr. Charlton's jealousy and his masterful love, to see a tall powerful man, with the approved or regulation tawny beard, and all the rest of

re-gigantic and tyrannical accessories; but having found this sage naturally present itself, she ought to have known that the real man would be the very opposite of all this. So, of course, it proved. Robert Charlton was a small, slender, delicate-looking man, with long, thin fingers, such as an Asiatic worker in ivory might have; a dark, silky beard, the very silkiness of which suggested a wasted or over-refined physical constitution. He was sitting in the window engaged at some work upon a fan when Gabrielle entered, and was trying to catch all the sunlight that allowed itself to take the trouble of piercing its way into Bolingbroke Place. He seemed nervous to the point of personal distress when Gabrielle entered, and while he was presented to her by his wife. He gave Gabrielle a chair, however, with a certain graceful shyness, and then he stood up as if wondering what was to come next. Janet sat on a sofa, and seemed as if she were not expected to make any part of the social interview. This would have been a little embarrassing to most visitors, but it did not affect Gabrielle in the least.

'You are a wonderful worker, Mr. Charlton,' she said, by way of a beginning; 'I never saw such delicate manipulation as yours.'

The tone of her voice had a friendly ring about it. She seemed above all things sympathetic, to begin with.

'I am glad you think so,' Robert answered hesitatingly; 'some people don't understand the difficulty; I like to meet with one who does. It is the only thing I can do.'

'Oh, now, there's a story!' Janet broke in, roused from her quiescence by his disparagement of himself—a thing she never could stand. 'Indeed it is not true, Mrs. Vanthorpe, not a word; although he always goes on that way. He can do ever so many things; he could do anything he tried to, I am sure.'

Gabrielle turned to her in admiration; the little woman was looking so lovely in the fervour of her excitement.

'I am sure he can do many things,' Gabrielle said; 'I see you have hands that ought to be able to do anything in the way of artistic work, Mr. Charlton: hands as slender and delicate as a girl's; but strong, I dare say, as a girl's can't be.'

Charlton looked quickly at his hands, with an embarrassed but not at all a displeased air, and turned off attention by saying to his wife: 'Janet, I am sure this lady—'

'Mrs. Vanthorpe,' said Gabrielle, smiling.

'Mrs. Vanthorpe would like a cup of tea.'

Of course Gabrielle took care to say that she wished for a cup of tea above all things.

'You will excuse me, Mrs. Vanthorpe, I hope,' Robert went on, brightening up a little, 'if I seemed to forget your name. Of course, I knew well enough that it was for Mrs. Vanthorpe I was doing the work; but when I saw you I never thought you were the lady. You look too young to be a married lady. I thought you were Miss Vanthorpe, perhaps, or some other relation of the lady I was working for.'

'I am not so young as your wife, I think,' Gabrielle said; 'yet she is Mrs. Charlton.'

'Yes, that is quite true,' he answered; 'but then—' and he stopped and became embarrassed; for he knew that the Mrs. Vanthorpe he was working for was a widow, and he was on the verge of saying something of the kind. His habitually pale face grew almost red at the thought of what he had so nearly uttered.

Gabrielle was for a moment a little embarrassed too, but she recovered herself in the resolve to set him at his ease.

'Your wife is a beautiful woman—or girl, I ought to call her,' she said. Janet was now in another room, bustling about in the preparation of the tea. 'I think I never saw such lovely hair. You must be very proud of her.'

'She is very beautiful,' he said uneasily, and his face colouring once more. 'She is too handsome for the kind of life we have to lead; I only hope she will not come to think so.'

'Oh, she never will,' said Gabrielle decisively. 'She is not at all like that.' Gabrielle spoke as confidently as if she had known Janet from her earliest infancy. 'She does not seem to value her own beauty in the least, except as it pleases you. She appears to me to be a model wife, and I am sure you appreciate her, Mr. Charlton.'

'I do appreciate her, I do,' he said, as if in a tone of self-remonstrance; 'I never like to find fault with her; but what kind of life is this for a woman so pretty as she? She has to go about here on errands for me, with my work and that, like any common servant. People may talk to her, and tell her she is too handsome for that sort of thing.'

'She is much too sensible and much too fond of you to care for any such stuff. You must not think we women are all fools, Mr. Charlton.'

'She would be a fool,' he said, shaking his head, 'if she thought the kind of life she leads here was a pleasant one, or fit for a woman like her. It is all very well to talk wisely on the matter; but there are people enough about to tell her so, and fill her mind with the thought.'

'You want faith in her,' Gabrielle said, almost angry with him for his perversity. 'I don't think you deserve so fond a wife, Mr. Charlton.'

'Exactly,' he answered, with an uneasy smile. 'That is just what people will tell her, I dare say; that I am unworthy of her, and all that sort of thing. It does affect a woman's mind, however well-inclined she may be.'

Janet entered the room again, and cut short the conversation. She was handing Gabrielle a cup of tea, when a tap was heard at the door. Charlton looked towards his wife uneasily.

'It's Mr. Lefussis, dear,' Janet said. 'Mrs. Vanthorpe won't care to be disturbed.'

'Oh, he can't come in now,' Robert said. 'He is a man who lodges here; not a bad fellow, but a nuisance sometimes.'

Gabrielle fancied it must be the young man she had seen, and she was anxious for an opportunity of seeing him again.

'Don't send him away for me, please,' she said. 'I must not put you out of your usual ways. Mrs. Charlton promised me that you were not to be interfered with by me.'

Meanwhile the visitor who had tapped, and indeed tapped again without getting any answer while this discussion was going on, now gently opened the door, and was entering. When he saw a strange lady he began a sort of apology, but made no attempt to withdraw. He was a tall lean man, some fifty years of age or thereabouts, wearing a shabby brown waterproof coat, which did not seem to cover any undercoat. He wore a stiff rigid old-fashioned stock of forgotten mould round his neck, and his shirt-collar suggested the days of the first Reform Bill. He had stiff beaver gloves, one of which was carried on, the other in, a hand. He was apparently the wreck of a gentleman; a hulk that had been much wasted and battered by adverse wind and weather. His thin hair and whiskers had that dusty grey on their edges which always suggests what Henry of Navarre called the wind of adversity blowing in the face. It showed curiously unlike the soft comfortable grey that speaks of life to the latest well enjoyed, and of dinners always sure to come at the right time.

'Beg pardon, I am sure,' the visitor said; 'I hope I may come in just for a moment. I am not going to make any stay. I trust the lady will excuse me.'

'Mr. Lefussis, madame,' said Janet, doing the honours not very willingly. 'A—a friend of Robert's and mine.'

Mr. Lefussis made a grand bow, with a wave of the arm that suggested the necessity of a three-cornered hat to render the

effect of the gesture complete. Gabrielle acknowledged the salutation with external graciousness and internal wonder.

'I thought you would like to know, Charlton,' he said grandly. 'I have been in town; in the Whitehall region, you know, F. O. in fact. I have had a long chat with Lord Bosworth, and I know all that's going to be done. The German ambassador came in before I left, and Bosworth went over a good deal of it for him again; but not all, not quite all, of course.'

Some one ought to have said something, apparently, for Mr. Lefussis paused a moment. But Charlton sat with his eyes fixed on his own slender hands, and made no observation. Janet never pretended to have anything to say where lords and ambassadors and such-like personages were the subject of conversation; and Gabrielle did not feel it incumbent on her to do or say anything.

'Things are looking very bad,' Mr. Lefussis went on, when he found that he had as yet made no great impression; 'I don't well know, indeed, how they could by any possibility be much worse. If some step be not taken to hold this government back from the mad course they are pursuing, we shall have all Europe in war in less than a month.'

'Good gracious!' exclaimed Janet, roused into attention by this appalling prospect. 'Can nothing be done, Mr. Lefussis?'

'Bosworth can do nothing,' he said decisively, and now addressing himself to Janet, as she alone appeared to have given proper attention to his story. 'He sees it all as plainly as I do; but he can do nothing. What could he do, you see? It isn't for him, Mrs. Charlton.'

'Oh, isn't it?' asked Janet, much perplexed; 'what a pity! Isn't there anybody who can do anything?'

'Yes,' he answered with dignity; 'I hope I can do something, I mean to try. Leven can do something; Taxal can do something, in his small way, of course, in his small way. We can hold meetings; I am going at once to Taxal and to Leven.'

The names gave Gabrielle a chance of coming into the conversation which she was rather glad of, for it was clear that Charlton would not enter into it, and poor Janet was fast breaking down, and Mr. Lefussis would not go away.

'Is "Leven" Major Leven, may I ask? Do you know Major Leven?'

'Certainly, madame, certainly. I knew Leven in Demerara—let me see—when was it? In '52 or '55; I am really not quite certain which. You know Major Leven, madame?'

'Major Leven is a very old friend of mine, and a very dear friend,' Gabrielle answered, feeling her sentiments towards Mr.

Lefussis grow warmer and deeper because of his intimacy with Major Leven.

‘Indeed!’ Lefussis eagerly said, and his eyes sparkled with unspeakable satisfaction. ‘Then I tell you what it is, Mrs. Charlton, my coming in to tell this to your husband is one of the most remarkable illustrations of the working of Providence in our human affairs that you can well imagine. I fancy Charlton is inclined to be a little of a sceptic now and then; but I hope even he won’t quite disregard the meaning of what I am going to say.’

Charlton looked up for a moment and nodded, but said nothing. Gabrielle was now quite bewildered.

‘Look here,’ Lefussis went eagerly on; ‘I came in to see your husband, Mrs. Charlton, never dreaming that I was to have the happiness and the honour of an introduction to this lady; and even when I had that happiness and that honour, never dreaming that in her I was to see a valued friend of Major Leven. Is there nothing providential in this? Why, this lady has only to sit down at Charlton’s desk there and write me a letter of introduction to Major Leven, and it may be that Europe is saved from a war.’

‘I thought you said you knew this gentleman?’ Charlton interposed, looking suddenly up.

‘So I do, my dear fellow, so I do; at least, I did, you know, in Demerara, and other places too; but men forget each other. I haven’t been to dine with Leven this long time; and I never see him at the club now; I believe he has got married or something of the sort; but if this lady would just be kind enough to give me a line of introduction, it might perhaps be the means of rousing him to a deeper interest; and she might hereafter claim to have had her share in saving England from a disgraceful war.’

Poor Janet interchanged glances of agony with her husband. This was too bad; Mrs. Vanthorpe seemed destined to be tormented by all their fellow-lodgers in turn. Now surely after this she would never come again.

‘I should be delighted to bear my share in saving England from so great a calamity,’ Gabrielle said gravely; ‘but I fear I ought not to give any introduction to Major Leven just now. I have some good reason for not writing to him at present.’

‘Now that is rather a pity,’ the unabashed Lefussis said. ‘You see, it would be such an advantage, and might do so much good; but of course if you can’t, why there’s an end. Might I even mention your name to Leven?—as a friend of my friends here, you know.’

‘Oh, but please, Mr. Lefussis,’ said Janet, in a low deprecating

tone, 'don't make a mistake. Robert and I are not so presumptuous as to call ourselves friends of this lady.'

'That lady's face,' Lefussis decisively affirmed, 'proclaims her a friend of the whole human race. I ought to understand something of faces, and I can see that. I hope the lady will excuse me if I seem somewhat forward and pressing; it is in a great cause—a great cause; and there is no time to be lost. I'll go and talk to Fielding; Fielding sometimes has suggestions to give; and in any case I must see Leven and Taxal. Good evening, madame; good evening, Mrs. Charlton; good evening, Charlton. I thought you would like to know how things were going, and so I looked in.'

'Now, who is he?' Gabrielle asked in much curiosity after Mr. Lefussis had gone.

'He is a fool, madame,' said Charlton—'excuse me if I use strong language—an idiot who is made happy in his poverty and his failure by telling himself and everyone he can get to listen that he is hand and glove with every great person——.'

'Oh, Robert,' his wife interposed, 'I am sure poor Mr. Lefussis is very kind and friendly, and he means everything well. It was very wrong in him to make such a request of Mrs. Vanthorpe, and I shall tell him so; but he never meant to be rude, Mrs. Vanthorpe, he never did, indeed.'

'He was not rude,' Gabrielle said; 'he was very polite, and I feel interested in him; but I am anxious to know whether he deceives himself, or is trying to deceive other people?'

'He deceives himself,' Charlton said; 'he is not conscious of contradicting himself, or making up stories, or being an idiot. Whatever he likes to believe, he imagines; and he is happy for the time. I believe he is a gentleman, and I believe he had prospects once; and now he has come to live in this place and to have Janet and me for friends.'

'Is he poor?' asked Gabrielle.

'Poor as a church mouse,' Charlton answered. 'In fact, I don't know what he lives on; Janet and I are rich in comparison. But I presume he thinks he patronises us because we never belonged to the class that has thrown him off.'

'I should like to do something for him, if I could,' Gabrielle said quietly.

'You may do anything you like for him, madame,' Charlton said, with an angry flush crossing his face, but only seeming to touch its surface as one sometimes sees a sunset ray fall on a little frozen pool. 'You may do anything you like for him, but I beg you will not think of doing anything for me. I want nothing;

Janet and I want nothing from anybody. I am not a gentleman, she is not a lady; I am ready to work for ladies and gentlemen, but I don't want patronage, and I don't want help.' He did not look at Gabrielle all the time, but kept uneasily moving up and down the room and rubbing his hands.

'Oh, Robert, Robert,' his wife entreated; 'how can you go on in such a way? I am sure Mrs. Vanthorpe never meant——'

Gabrielle was neither alarmed nor offended. She took this outbreak with perfect composure; indeed, it interested her far more than ordinary conversation would have done.

'Your husband is quite right, child,' she said quietly to Janet. 'I like him the better for his independence. But when I think of intruding my patronage it will be quite time, Mr. Charlton, to resent it, will it not? I was only thinking, when I spoke of serving your friend here, whether I might really venture to give him a letter to Major Leven—my doubt was on family reasons only. I am glad to know your wife, and I like her very much. I shall be glad to know you if you will allow me.'

Charlton seemed a little ashamed of his outburst, and Gabrielle turned the conversation presently on books and on art, of which she found that Charlton knew a good deal in the scrappy dogmatic way common to 'self-educated' persons, as the phrase is. He had many fresh ideas, and she drew him artfully into talk until he became much delighted with himself and with her, and quite eloquent in the end. Gabrielle did not think she could safely approach the question of Janet's beauty and his jealous humours that time. She would come again, she thought, and accomplish that part of her mission; the first thing was to win Charlton's confidence in herself. That she did her best to accomplish at once. So far did she get, that before she had left he promised to come with his wife to see Gabrielle at her house. Gabrielle was as proud of having conquered thus far, and tamed his fierce independence, as if she were a commander who has succeeded in capturing some strong position at the beginning of a battle. Her goodness and her good opinion of her own skill were gratified alike.

Gabrielle was about to go. She had ordered her little carriage to come for her, and it had now been some time waiting. She had lingered a good deal, not altogether without a hope that the young man she had seen at the door might come in, and that she might have an opportunity of seeing what he was like. She had made up her mind that there was something mysterious about *this young man*, and about the wonder which he had expressed *when he heard her name*.

What is the name of your other fellow-lodger?' she asked carelessly. 'The young man who was at the door when you came down to-day, Mrs. Charlton—the young man who let me in?'

'Was *he* there?' Charlton asked of his wife. 'You didn't tell me that.'

'He opened the door for me very politely,' said Gabrielle. 'Mrs. Charlton was not there just then.'

'His name is Fielding,' Robert said. 'I don't know very well who he is; he thinks a good deal of himself, I fancy; I wish he would mind his own affairs a little more. He seems a clever sort of fellow, but rather eccentric.'

Gabrielle was gratified to hear that he was eccentric. So far as that went, it fitted in with the little speculation in which she had already been indulging her active fancy.

She would not hear of Robert Charlton's coming to show her down-stairs; his time was far too valuable, she said, to be wasted in ceremonial. Mrs. Charlton would light her down, and she would not have anyone else. She went down the dark stairs with Janet, smiling and nodding a good-bye to Robert as she looked back. Then she leaned upon Janet's arm in the friendliest fashion, and told her in a whisper that she hoped to accomplish all for her yet in bringing her husband to reason; and she put Janet into a very bewilderment of pride and delight. Just as they came to the bottom of the stairs a door on the left opened, and Mr. Lefussis and Fielding came out together. Gabrielle graciously bowed to both. Lefussis at once insisted on opening her carriage-door for her, which he did with the air of a man who still believes that in carriages sit his natural companions. Fielding remained behind and talked to Janet.

Gabrielle somewhat relaxed towards Lefussis.

'Perhaps I might be able to do something in the way of introducing you to Major Leven,' she said. 'If you were to call on me, Mr. Lefussis, the day after to-morrow, perhaps I might have thought of some way; and I should like to bear my part in saving England from destruction.'

'What part more worthy of a noble-hearted English lady?' the delighted Lefussis said, taking her words quite seriously. 'I shall esteem it the highest honour to be allowed to wait upon you after to-morrow or any day.'

Gabrielle gave him her address, and left him in a condition of exalted happiness. Surely never woman had in a few minutes—an hour or so—made more admirers with honester intention. Janet and Lefussis both remained a moment or two on the door-step to

sound her praises ; both agreed that so charming, so delightful, so kind, so unaffected, so altogether noble a young woman, was never seen before. Poor Lefussis saw himself once more a welcome visitor in those West-end drawing-rooms from which he had for some little time been sadly absent. Janet saw a peaceful happy home opening up for her as the result of this almost angelic visitation. As for Mr. Fielding, he agreed in all that was said about Gabrielle's beauty and grace of appearance ; but he entered a protest as regarded her manners, which he still professed to consider rude. His two companions, however, raised indignant protest, and he gave up the contest, and went back to his room, wondering much within himself as to who the young and handsome woman could be who bore the name of Mrs. Vanthorpe.

'Robert, dear, is she not delightful?' Janet asked, as she burst in upon her husband.

He raised his head from some piece of work he seemed to be bending over earnestly, but he did not look at Janet.

'Who is delightful, Janet?'

'Oh, Mrs. Vanthorpe, of course. Is she not charming?'

'She is charming,' Robert slowly said, and he went on with his work. Janet was disappointed. *He* did not seem nearly so much gladdened by Gabrielle's visit as Janet was, or as she had expected that he would be.

'So kind she is,' Janet said. 'We are to spend an evening with her, Robert ; when shall we go?'

'I don't know ; perhaps I shall not go at all.'

'But that would be so very unkind, and such a bad return for her kindness, Robert ! And she likes to talk to you about books and pictures and things.'

'She can't care to talk to a man like me,' he said. 'She puts it on, out of kindness ; but she can't really care. She knows too many people who are educated and gentlemen ; not fellows like me.'

'Oh, but she does care, I know ; I could see by her manner. You would not understand her manner so well as I could, Robert. I know she was pleased to talk to you.'

'I have read of such women,' Robert said ; 'I never talked with one before—I mean, except in the way of this wretched business. I suppose they are common enough in that class.'

'What sort of women, Robert?'

'Women who can talk of things that rational men care to hear about.'

Janet did not resent this, and indeed did not understand it in any sense disparaging to herself. She always assumed that a poor

man's wife was not supposed to know anything about books, and that her husband would no more complain of her on that account than because she had not brought him a large fortune.

'She is very rich,' Janet said, returning to her favourite topic. 'My aunt says that her husband left her ever so much money.'

'I shall never leave you any money,' Charlton said.

'You gave me your love, Robert, and all your cleverness, dear.'

'I couldn't endow you with that,' he said sharply, and he turned doggedly to his work.

Janet did not quite understand this sarcasm, but she knew that something was wrong with Robert. She saw that, for some reason or other, the visit she had looked forward to with so much hope, and which had given her such delight, had not yet added to her husband's stock of happiness. Robert did not talk any more. He looked up once or twice, and glanced around the room, and at Janet. The room showed very mean and pitiful in his eyes; his work seemed mechanical and ignoble; and Janet's hair looked less glorious than usual.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROLLING STONE AND THE MILLSTONE.

ROBERT CHARLTON was a man just clever enough to be bitterly discontented, and loving enough to be morbidly jealous. He had had no school education. He had somehow got it into his head that he must have come of a high family, and that anyhow fate had done him a personal wrong in not making him a gentleman. His way of educating himself had made him dogmatic, and had allowed him to grow into the conviction that he had genius far above his sphere or his chances. The very work which he could do so well, and which was in its own way strictly artistic, he despised even while he was vain of his success in it. He was short of stature and feeble; and he convinced himself that only handsome men were ever really loved by women. He made himself miserable in his love-making days when Janet would not marry him at once, because he persuaded himself that if he had only been tall, handsome, or a gentleman, she would have taken him without delay; and now that he was married he made himself miserable with the idea that his wife's head might be turned by the admiration of anybody who was tall, or rich, or handsome; not to say by anyone—and, alas! he knew how many such there were!—who was tall, handsome, and of high social position all at once. He girded at men or women of position if he supposed they were presuming to patronise him; and he raged at them in silence when they

seemed to take no notice of him. The countesses and other fine ladies of whom Mrs. Bramble had spoken filled him with wrath when they came and sat condescendingly by him in his room and watched his work. He knew that their familiarity was only the cruellest evidence of the fathomless gulf they supposed to exist between him and them. They never spoke to him on any subject that was not in some way connected with his craft. It was with perfect truth he had said that Gabrielle was the only lady with whom he had ever really talked. She was not, good sooth, of the countess or duchess class; but he saw that she was a lady who might have held herself at a wide distance from him, and therefore, when she sate and talked with him in such an unaffected and friendly way, he felt an entirely new sensation of gratified vanity and stimulated intelligence stirring within him. It pleased him to say to his wife that Mrs. Vanthorpe did not care to talk to him, and to draw forth Janet's simple earnest assurance of her conviction that Mrs. Vanthorpe felt great delight in his conversation.

Janet had gone to bed early, and her husband remained in their sitting-room working. Presently he heard the street-door open to some late lodger, and after a few moments he heard a familiar step coming up the stairs towards his room. He knew that it was Fielding's step, and at the moment he was not glad of the visit. His feelings towards Fielding were a curious compound of liking and dislike, of sympathy and distrust. In the first place, he was inclined to dislike Fielding because the latter was tall and good-looking. On the other hand, Fielding seemed, like himself, to be poor, and to be discontented with the world. The sweet and sacred bond of poor devilship, therefore, ought to have held them together; and this was a bond which, to do him justice, Charlton was inclined to recognise. What particular occupation Fielding followed he had never been quite able to make out, but in that house men did not trouble themselves much about each other's occupations.

The step came to his door, the knock which he had expected followed, and Fielding came in.

'Hard at work, as usual,' Fielding said. 'I say, Charlton, what a fagging fellow you are! You are always slaving. You ought to make a fortune.'

'Yes, I am very likely to make a fortune!' Charlton grimly said. 'People in this old building often make fortunes, don't they? What an opulent fellow Lefussis is, for example.'

Charlton motioned to the effect that there was a chair at Fielding's service. Fielding accepted the invitation, somewhat *careless though it was*, and sat down.

'Lefussis is off his head,' he said; 'he has been invited by that pretty woman who was here this evening to call upon her. He fully believes he is going into the gilded saloons again.'

'He had better get a new coat, I would suggest,' said Charlton, made angry by the idea of any civility being shown to Lefussis which might tend to diminish the value of the kindness offered to himself.

'So he said himself to me,' Fielding answered. 'He isn't ashamed of being poor. That's one reason why I like dear old Lefussis. He is a good deal of an idiot, and a dash of a madman, but he continues to be a gentleman all the same.'

Charlton looked angry. He was always suspecting that people were implying that he was not a gentleman.

'By the way,' Fielding asked, 'who is that woman? She is very handsome, although she is so pale. I am rather curious about her.'

'She is a Mrs. Vanthorpe.'

'Thank you. Yes, she told me that much herself. But I want to know who the Mrs. Vanthorpe is. I should have expected an elderly Mrs. Vanthorpe; but I didn't think of a girl looking as young as Janet there.'

'As—Janet?'

'Yes; as Janet. Janet is your wife's name, isn't it? As Mrs. Robert Charlton, I ought to have said, no doubt, to be properly formal, and not to disturb the mind of a jealous old blockhead like yourself—or young blockhead, if you insist on it; young, that is, in years, but old in absurdity.'

'We were talking about Mrs. Vanthorpe,' Charlton said.

'So we were. Your words, Charlton, recall me to myself, as they used to say in the Surrey tragedies. Well, I am curious to know something about this pretty Mrs. Vanthorpe. Is she a widow?'

'She is.'

'That is very strange. I can't make it out.'

'What? that there should be a young widow?'

'No, but about this young widow. You see, Charlton, Vanthorpe is not a very common name; it isn't even as common as Charlton—'

'Or Fielding,' interjected the other, irritated by the faintest suggestion of disparagement to his name or himself.

'Or Fielding, as you say. Well, I knew a Vanthorpe in the States; I knew him in St. Louis and also in New Orleans.'

'I didn't know you had been in America.'

'Didn't you? did I never tell you? Well, that shows how dis-

creet a person I am, and don't bore people with my travels. Of all things on earth, nothing bores one like another fellow's travels. I have been in all sorts of places in my time. I knew this Vanthorpe, and we were thrown a good deal together. We rather took to one another, in fact, we two Britishers. He interested me. I don't say that he was the sort of man Dean Stanley or Dr. Newman would have got on with, but I liked him.'

'Was he anything to this Mrs. Vanthorpe?'

'That is just the thing I should like to know. He never spoke of any Mrs. Vanthorpe but his mother. I presume he had not been the very best of sons; he talked about his mother in a sort of way that made me think so.'

'What became of him since?'

'Ah, yes; just so, exactly; what did? Anyhow, his story wouldn't interest you, Charlton, my good fellow, and so I'll use the same discretion you say I displayed with regard to my travels. By the way, are you fond of travelling?'

'I never travel anywhere. How could I get time and money to travel? I never was out of England in my life. I have been always working in this sort of way, and I dare say I always shall be. A man who has a wife to keep can't travel.'

'There you go—grumbling again! You married fellows really ought to remember that you can't have everything in life. You can't have the charming wife, the life-companion, the angel in the house and all that, and have the freedom of a travelling tinker besides. You oughtn't to envy us poor bachelors the desolate freedom of the wild ass—isn't that somebody's phrase? You would not exchange Janet—I mean, of course, Mrs. Robert Charlton—for the independence of the freest bachelor Red Indian that ever sold beads and nuts at the Cheyenne railway station.'

'Then you don't know anything now about this man Vanthorpe—the man in America?'

'Man in the South; so he was; in the Southern States; and he burnt his mouth, I rather fancy, many a time. I did not say I knew nothing about him now, Charlton. I only said his story would not interest you, and no more it would, and therefore I am not going to tell it. But I am greatly interested in the Mrs. Vanthorpe I saw to-day, and I wish you would tell me something about her.'

'There's nothing to tell. My wife's aunt is a servant, as I dare say she has confessed to you and everybody she knows long before this; simply a servant. She is a servant in Mrs. Vanthorpe's house, and Mrs. Vanthorpe is kind enough to take an interest in the husband of her servant's niece, and gives him jobs of work to do;

and that's how she comes to be here. I know nothing else about her, and I don't ask questions. I know my place, as all the servants say. If one's wife has relations in service, what's the use of affecting to be better than one's class?'

'What a delightful creature you are, Charlton—so genial and full of gratitude and of the milk of human kindness! If ever I get up a great social revolution I shall know where to look for someone to chop off the heads of the bloated aristocrats for me. You have the regulation look of the Caliban-Robespierre-Desmoulins—that sort of thing. I should think, now, you could easily be got to take quite a pleasure in fixing that pretty young woman's neck in the guillotine just because she was kind to your wife and wants to be a lady-patroness to you.'

'She does not propose to be a lady-patroness to me. I gave her my mind pretty clearly on that subject.'

'Did you really? What a nice, polite, refined creature she must have thought you!'

'I don't care; she shan't patronise me.'

'Shan't she? Well, I don't mind, I'm sure. I only wish she would patronise me. We should see which would grow tired first, she or I.'

'I don't believe it,' said Charlton angrily. 'I do not believe you would endure it. At least, I don't know; some fellows have no—Anyhow, I am not to be patronised.'

'Some fellows have no spirit, you were going to say. All right; I shouldn't have any spirit of that kind where so charming a woman as that was concerned. If she looked at me in a particular sort of way, I would lie down at her feet. "Oh, sweet, divine creature, come and trample on me," that would be my word. I am quite serious, Charlton, you precocious young-old savage. I should say to her, "Queen of my soul, have the gracious goodness to imprint the heels of your boots on this manly forehead."'

'Why don't you make a pretext of asking her whether she is any connection of this Vanthorpe you knew?'

'No; I shall not do that,' said Fielding gravely. There was a moment's silence.

'Won't you have something to drink?' asked Charlton, seeing that his visitor was not making any movement as if to go away. 'Some brandy and water?'

'Beg your pardon—you were saying—something to drink? No. But that reminds me of what I came for. You just come down to my room. I have got some wonderful burgundy; that's why I came up for you. Come with me, and we'll have some, or if you don't like to come down, I'll bring a bottle up. But I think we

should be better below we shouldn't spoil your wife's little room with our smoke.'

Janet did not like the smell of smoke, to be sure, but Charlton was on the point of refusing his invitation coldly for all that. He did not like hearing of his wife's 'little room.' It was not a very big room, truly; but what manner of man was Fielding to give himself airs and talk patronisingly about people's little rooms? His own room was not by any means a very spacious apartment; and a man who was still a bachelor could afford to put on the ways of easy comfort at small expense. Then, Fielding was certainly a younger man than Charlton, and he therefore might be expected to be a little more respectful.

'I see you don't want to come down,' said the irrepressibly good-natured Fielding. 'All right; I'll bring you up a bottle, and we'll be very comfortable here. We'll open the windows; or, I say, we'll not smoke? It does not matter for once, and we ought to think of Janet—I mean, of Mrs. Robert Charlton.' In a moment Charlton came to the conclusion that Fielding did not want him to go down, and also that he was patronising Janet.

'Oh no, let us go down,' he said. 'We shall, as you say, be more comfortable in your large apartment than in the little room where Janet and I have to live.'

Fielding looked at him and laughed.

'What a delightful old surly bear you are, Charlton! You are quite a study, I declare. You are a modern copy of the what's-his-name in Terence; the self-tormenting fellow, you know.'

Charlton made no reply. Indeed, he was used to compliments of this kind; and although he deserved them, he could not keep from acting in a way to deserve them. They went down together.

Fielding's room was not a very large one certainly, and its fittings were not luxurious; they were quite in keeping with the general conditions of the place. A round table in the middle covered with a dark red cloth, a few chairs with horsehair cushions, a little sofa of the same description; a mirror in a gilt frame over the chimney-piece, which if it had been a magic mirror could not have reflected more clearly the story of a poorer-class London lodging-house; an engraving of her Majesty the Queen, and one or two coloured pictures from an illustrated paper. These were the utensils and the ornaments of the room. But it did not escape the observation of Robert Charlton that there were some smaller properties of a very different kind. There was, for example, a pretty lamp of antique shape, and which Charlton was certain had cost money, and had never been bought by any lodging-house keeper. There were coats and rugs of an expensive kind lying

around ; there was an ebony writing-desk such as one does not buy in a cheap furniture shop ; and in one of the compartments of the desk which happened to be open there was lying a diamond ring which sparkled in the very eyes of Charlton as he entered the room. Charlton had keen sight, and immense observation for costly and beautiful things. He might almost be said to have exchanged glances with the diamond, so quickly did his eye flash on it as it flashed. Fielding may have observed the look, for he too glanced at the desk.

‘You must make a lot of money sometimes or somehow,’ Charlton said. ‘But you will be robbed some night, if you leave such things lying about.’

‘Men come down in the world sometimes, don’t they, Charlton? You have come down yourself, I am inclined to think ; but I don’t ask questions.’

This, whether said purposely or not, was touching Charlton at his weakest point. Of all things it most delighted him to have it supposed that he had come down to his present position from some place in society. He became more friendly to his companion at once. Moreover, he was sympathetic enough to understand that a man who had once had money and had mixed in good company would like, through whatever difficulties, to keep with him some relics of the departed brighter days. So much was he softened towards Fielding, that he could not help admitting to himself that his host must have looked a handsome young fellow in the season when the diamond ring and the other costly things were appropriate to his every-day life. The burgundy proved to be delicious, and Charlton had the most of it. He observed that Fielding enjoyed it and seemed to appreciate it, what he did drink of it ; but he certainly drank very little. The thin pale face of Robert Charlton began to colour and glow a little with the genial effect.

They talked of many things, and argued and disputed not a little. Charlton observed that Fielding often brought the talk back to Mrs. Vanthorpe. Charlton, however, had little to disclose on that subject, for he knew very little himself. As they were separating, Robert’s quick eye fell upon the back of an old letter which Fielding threw down after having torn a part of the envelope to light his cigar. He observed that it was addressed to ‘—Fielding, Esq., Langham Hotel.’

‘So you were once living at the Langham Hotel? Pretty expensive place, isn’t it?’

‘Stayed there after I came back from America last,’ Fielding said coolly. ‘A man has money sometimes, Charlton, and some of us are never happy when we have it unless we find some way of

spending it. Yes, you can spend money at the Langham if you like ; but I don't know that it is a particularly expensive place in the ordinary way. Many American fellows go there ; I went with an American fellow.'

'I just remember something, by the way,' Charlton said suddenly. 'You have a good many books, Fielding. I wonder, have you anything among them that would throw a light on something I want to know about just now? I have got a fan to repair, and there must be some new colouring put to it. It's a fan with little pictures of famous places—the Parthenon at Athens, Alhambra, and that monument—the Taj Mahal, isn't it?—in India. I want to get a right notion of the general colours, you know ; not to do as a man did who gave a general tone of grey to the Coliseum and of red to the leaning tower of Pisa.'

'I have not any books,' Fielding said, after a moment's thought ; 'but if you show me the thing, I dare say I can tell you all you want to know. I've seen all these places, and I think I can remember perfectly well what they were like—as to shades and colour, and all that.'

'You have seen all these places?' Charlton asked, in undisguised wonder.

'Yes, I told you I had been in some places,' Fielding answered carelessly. 'I have been a sort of rolling-stone in my time ; and you see I haven't gathered much moss.'

'I have been a mill-stone fastened here and grinding here all day ; I don't know that I have got much by that.'

'You might make quite an instructive fable of that, Charlton. What the mill-stone said to the rolling-stone.—A rolling-stone once being rebuked by a mill-stone ;—you see the idea?'

Then the mill-stone and the rolling-stone were separated for the night.

Next day Charlton said to his wife: 'I don't know what to make of that fellow Fielding, Janet. I wish you would avoid making much acquaintance with him.'

'I hardly ever see him, Robert, unless when he comes in to see you. Why don't you know what to make of him?'

'He has been everywhere, travelled all over the world almost, Greece, Spain, America, India, every place. He has all the ways of a man who spends money ; he has diamonds, and he gave me burgundy last night that must have cost a big price. And what is he? what does he do for a living?'

Janet suggested that perhaps he was in the City.

'Stuff, Janet! sometimes he doesn't go out for three days together. I thought he might be a literary man, but there's no

one of that name in the field that I ever heard. He isn't a painter, for he never paints. He isn't a newspaper writer, for he doesn't often go out at nights.'

Janet was going to say that he was a very nice gentlemanly man anyhow; but she reflected in time on the inexpediency of indulging in praise of any male creature. She had begun her sentence, however, and she had to finish it; so she suggested that possibly he might be a detective.

'A detective! You are a fool, Janet. No; he isn't a detective, you may take your oath of that. If I have any suspicions at all, they point a very different way.'

CHAPTER VI.

GABRIELLE'S CLIENTS.

IF mental activity constitute the nearest approach to happiness in mortals, as the philosophic prose-poet maintains, then Gabrielle Vanthorpe's condition just now ought to have been happy. Her mind was much occupied with more or less advanced and active projects for the benefit of her fellow-creatures. She was determined to win again the affection of Mrs. Leven by finding out her lost son and restoring him to her arms; and strange as the idea may seem, she had all but persuaded herself that the young man she had seen in Bolingbroke Place could put her on the track of the lost one. If Gabrielle had ventured to confess boldly to herself all that her fancy would fain have persuaded her to be true, she would have said that she imagined the young man Fielding himself to be the vanished prodigal. But even if this should not be so—and she did not dare to tell herself too plainly that it actually was so—it seemed certain to her that the young man must know something of the matter. Else why did he seem so much surprised to hear the name of Vanthorpe? It was an uncommon name; but there was nothing in its sound to amaze any one, unless he had some particular associations connected with it. At all events, one of her schemes had to do with Fielding and Bolingbroke Place. Another of her schemes had to do with Bolingbroke Place as well, but it concerned the happiness of Robert and Janet Charlton. She proposed to make the one wise and content, and the other happy.

She had other projects, too, and other people to protect. Gabrielle had ventured on writing a short letter to Walter Taxal, asking him to come and see her some day, and telling him she had one or two favours to ask of him. She had long admired his singular good nature, his willingness to serve anyone, and his

restless energy, which was always occupying itself in new fields. She knew that he was at once amateur politician and amateur musician, and she had just now occasion to appeal to his kindness and his help in each capacity. She thought he ought to be able and willing to lend a hand to Lefussis in his important project for saving England. Gabrielle did not exactly believe that the salvation of the country really depended on Mr. Lefussis, or even on Mr. Lefussis and Walter Manny Taxal combined. But still she thought that if danger of any kind were impending, it might be as well not to neglect any chance of averting it. Even the most elementary reading of Roman history warned her against supposing that only wise and noble birds can do anything to save the Capitol.

That was one object she had in view in sending for Taxal. Another was the cause of a girl who was believed by her friends to have marvellous musical and dramatic talent, and who only wanted a chance to throw Europe into ecstasies and make a fortune for herself. This young lady lived with her brother, much older than herself, and the brother had been Albert Vanthorpe's fencing-master years ago. When Gabrielle settled in Albert's house, he sought her out and made his appeal to her; and Gabrielle, without giving the matter ten minutes' consideration, had taken up the cause of the sister, and was prepared to champion her musical capacity against, if needs were, the Royal Academy of Music and a whole sceptical world. Now she thought Walter Taxal would be the very man to help this girl into a position which would enable her to help herself. Another woman in Gabrielle's place would have hesitated about writing to Taxal, for there had been at one time a vague idea that if Albert were not there Taxal might have become an admirer of hers. But Gabrielle never thought of such a thing now, and perhaps in any case would not have allowed any such mere conjecture to interfere between her and the chance of getting Walter Taxal to do good to himself and others by helping his fellow-creatures. 'There is somebody wanting to be helped, and here is somebody capable of giving the help'—it was after this fashion that Gabrielle would have reasoned—'What ought anyone to do who can do it but try to bring these two together?' She would rather have written to Major Leven than to Mr. Taxal, so far as Lefussis and the redemption of England were concerned; but she could not write to Major Leven while Major Leven's wife would not speak to her; and in any case Major Leven could neither appreciate nor assist her young musical prodigy.

The day when Gabrielle was expecting the visit from Mr.

Lefussis she received a card from Walter Taxal. She was sitting alone in the melancholy room that we may call her sanctuary; but she would not receive a visitor there. She hastened to her drawing-room, and there saw two figures, not one. When she entered, one of the two ran towards her, and caught her in his arms and kissed her. When she saw who it was, she returned his kisses; and the tears were in her eyes and in his. Walter Taxal stood modestly in the background.

‘How kind of you—oh, how kind of you to come and see me,’ Gabrielle said. ‘I did not like to write to you.’

‘My dear, I was always fond of you since I knew you,’ Major Leven said, recovering his voice as well as he could. ‘I always knew you for a sweet good girl. You have a friend in me, no matter what anybody may say. When Taxal told me that he was coming to see you, I said to myself, “I may come too, I may come too; Gabrielle must be changed indeed if she won’t receive me, and take my visit as it is meant, you know.” I can’t answer for others, Gabrielle, but I can answer for myself; and I am your friend, my dear, always your true friend.’

‘How is Mrs. Leven?’ Gabrielle asked timidly. ‘Does she ever speak of me? Oh, how I loved her.’

‘We have spoken of you, but not much, Gabrielle; not much as yet. It would not be well, perhaps; you ladies have odd ways—not all of you, I don’t mean—but some of you. But she’ll come round. I have been talking to her about her son—the other son, you know—I hope he is alive.’

‘I am sure he is alive,’ said Gabrielle suddenly, and then checked herself.

‘But here is Taxal,’ Major Leven said; ‘and I know you want to talk to him about something. I just came round with him. I didn’t mention to Mrs. Leven that I was coming, you know; it would not be of any use rousing premature feeling—’

Gabrielle smiled with tear-sparkling eyes, and held out her hand again to Leven in token of understanding and friendship. The kindly and chivalrous Leven pressed it to his lips.

‘We will trust to time,’ said Gabrielle bravely. ‘She will love me again, Major Leven.’

‘She will; she can’t help it,’ Leven declared energetically. ‘Well, I am truly happy to have seen you—’

‘No, you must not go yet,’ Gabrielle interposed. ‘I want you too, as well as Mr. Taxal. Do, Mr. Taxal, excuse us if we have been rudely inattentive. Major Leven and I are such old friends; and we have not seen each other this long time, and so many things have happened since we met last.’

Walter Taxal hastened to assure her that he was not in the least put out by the fact that he had been overlooked for a moment. Truth to say, he did not seem to harbour any deep resentment. Then Gabrielle began to unfold her projects; first, as regarded Mr. Lefussis. There was somewhat of a twinkle in Taxal's eyes when the name was mentioned.

'Surely we know something of Lefussis, Leven?' he said, turning to his friend. 'The man, isn't he, who proposes amendments at all the Conservative working men's meetings, and is invariably hustled out for his pains? I fancy he is not a very bad sort of fellow; a little out of it, perhaps, in the head. But how you came to know him, Mrs. Vanthorpe, I cannot imagine.'

'What does he want us to do for him, Gabrielle?' Major Leven asked. 'Tell him I'll do anything you ask me; only, my dear, I think I wouldn't be getting all sorts of odd people round me. You don't understand; you will be found believing everything everybody tells you. Now, I don't say a word against this poor Lefussis; I dare say he is a very honest fellow; but you must be cautious; you don't know anything of the world.'

'Listen to him,' Gabrielle said, 'to him who believes every tale of grievance every one tells him in the streets, and who has to leave his purse at home if he is not to get rid of all that is in it before he comes half-way to the end of a walk! He would bid me be cautious and careful and knowing about the world, and all the rest of it.'

'Well, well! good advice, you know, is good advice, even though one isn't always wise oneself. You must be prudent, Gabrielle, and not set people talking, not give them a handle, and all that. If Taxal and I ever make fools of ourselves, why it doesn't much matter. But tell poor Lefussis I'll do anything I can. Let him come and see me; he'll see Taxal to-day; I can't wait.'

Gabrielle could not well explain to them what Lefussis proposed to do, except generally to save England. Major Leven shook his head gravely, and expressed his fear, in all seriousness, that that was past praying for. But he declared that he was not for openly proclaiming despair, and that he would work with Lefussis or anyone else in a good cause. Then, as he had no end of other engagements, and as Mr. Taxal wanted to talk over some of them with him, it was arranged that Taxal should accompany him on some of his errands, and come back a little later in the day to see Lefussis and to hear the young aspirant for the crown of lyric song. It may be remarked that Taxal, for all his stock of native enthusiasm, grew grave when he heard of the new singer,

and thought hers a far more difficult undertaking than that of Mr. Lefussis.

The time seemed long and slow to Gabrielle when Leven and Taxal were gone, and she was left alone. She did not like now to be left alone. In her girlish days she had delighted in occasional solitude, but now loneliness oppressed her. It set her thinking of the youth who had loved her, and tormenting herself with doubts as to whether she had been to him all that she might have been. It allowed her to go over and over again, to no purpose, the story of her long companionship with Mrs. Leven, and its harsh and sudden severance; and again she tortured herself by trying to make up her mind as to whether she was to blame, and whether there was anything that she ought to have done in time and had not done. Her schemes of active benevolence, too, seemed to grow chill and bodiless when she was long alone. Her eager temperament faded and withered in enforced inactivity. She was glad when her maid came to tell of the arrival of the aspiring singer, and the singer's still more aspiring brother.

Professor Elvin—he was professor of the art of arms—entered the room with a long gliding step forward, and then a short step, and then a long gliding step again. He was a man of forty, with hair and beard already turned grey. He was straight, and almost as lithe as one of his own fencing foils; and he was always in some attitude that now suggested soldier, and now actor, and now again dancing-master. His beard and moustache were neatly trimmed; the beard into a little peak, the moustache into points. He was dressed in a dark blue single-breasted frock coat, fawn-coloured trousers, and wore lavender gloves, glossy and glazed with newness. Miss Elvin was a sallow girl, who looked as if she had stepped out of a mediæval painting—her chin was so pointed, her mouth was so large, her lips were so thin, her eyes were so long and mournful, her drapery was so darksome in its green. She had a way of first lowering and then suddenly raising her eyes, which discomposed the stranger. She accepted Gabrielle's genial welcome with a proud humility, like one who, conscious of supreme merit, leaves it to whomso it concerns to take the responsibility of making it known to the world.

'Yours is a noble ambition,' Gabrielle said enthusiastically, meaning what she said.

'We have had enemies,' Professor Elvin said, with a grand wave of the right arm. 'We have had many enemies. You will *not* be surprised to hear that, Mrs. Vanthorpe. My sister's voice and her talents must, of course, make enemies for her.'

'I suppose so; I have no doubt,' Gabrielle exclaimed, with

sparkling eyes. 'It is always so, I am afraid; the world is always like that. But I am not sorry to hear it in your case, Mr. Elvin; I should not have much faith in anyone who did not make enemies. Such enmity is only a tribute to your sister's talents.'

'Just so; exactly so; you are quite right, madame; so we feel it, I assure you. The more I hear of plots and conspiracies against this dear girl, the more I feel encouraged—the more I encourage her. I always say to her, "You ought to be proud of this, Gertrude—proud of it, my sister; it proves that they fear you as a rival." And they do fear her, Mrs. Vanthorpe; and they shall have cause to fear still more when she once begins to make her way.'

'I have had some enemies, undoubtedly,' the young aspirant said, with eyes modestly downcast, and speaking in the restrained tone of one who could tell startling things if she did but wish. 'You would hardly believe some of the things we have known of—known as a certainty—you would hardly believe them if you did not yourself know them. I don't see why they should fear. The lyric stage is surely wide enough for all of us.'

'They have conspired against her, madame; hatched plots and conspiracies to keep her off the boards of the Opera. The most popular singers of the day are in the plot—I won't call them the greatest; they are not great, any of them—and they have made the managers promise that she shall never have a chance. Why, I am in a position to prove that——' (he named a famous queen of song) 'actually told the manager that she would never sing for him again if he as much as gave Gertrude a trial.'

'But that is unspeakably mean and pitiful,' said Gabrielle; 'I cannot imagine anything more ignoble. Oh, it is too shameful.'

Miss Elvin tossed her head and shrugged her shoulders, as if to signify that really that was nothing, if Gabrielle knew but all.

'When self-conceit once gets possession of the mind,' the Professor loftily said, 'there is no measuring the depths of folly and meanness to which it will carry its victims.'

'That is only too true,' Gabrielle answered, so earnestly that Miss Elvin looked sharply up at her, as if suspecting for a moment that the remark had in it something of present application. But Gabrielle spoke simply and in perfect good faith; marvelling at the injustice and selfishness of a great singer, who, herself fed with success and fame, could endeavour to keep this poor young aspirant from even having a fair chance of showing what she could do.

'What I don't quite see,' said Gabrielle meditatively, 'is how

we are to battle against this conspiracy. Don't think I would have you fail in courage, Miss Elvin, or that I would fail in courage myself. Only, if all these great singers are in a band against us'—Gabrielle had already made Miss Elvin's cause her own—'I fear we can hardly do much against them.'

'Oh, madame, don't be at all intimidated. We shall soon crush them; crush them, madame, as completely as base plots ever were crushed. They think they can do anything now, because my sister is a poor unprotected girl, with no powerful friends to take up her cause, and only a humble fencing-master for a brother to fight her battle. Ah, if it were a battle that could be fought by a man's right arm, they should see! But when they find that she has some friends after all, rich and powerful friends, it will be a very different thing, Mrs. Vanthorpe; a very different thing, madame. We'll soon bring the managers to their knees, and the press, ma'am, the critics who are now in league against us.'

'But, Mr. Elvin,' Gabrielle said, very earnestly, for she was anxious that the brother and sister should be under no illusions, 'I am afraid you must not think of gaining any rich or powerful friends through me. I am not rich, and my friends are not powerful. I can only offer your sister sympathy and a helping hand.'

'You are a lady, madame, of rank and distinction, whose name is already becoming a household word for deeds of noble and discriminating generosity. Pardon me, Mrs. Vanthorpe, if for once I decline to allow even you to interrupt me; I say this, madame, in your presence, because it is the truth. You have friends among the rich and the powerful. The distinguished young nobleman whose name you did me the great honour to mention to me is celebrated wherever music is known as a patron of the art as judicious as he is generous. A word from him—a word in season, madame—will amply prove to all the world that Gertrude Elvin is no longer an unprotected girl on whom envy may trample with impunity.'

'Well,' Gabrielle said, when this burst of eloquence had passed away, 'I am sure Mr. Walter Taxal will do all he can to assist anyone who deserves his help, and whom—'

'And whom you recommend, Mrs. Vanthorpe—whom you recommend. Gertrude and I are well aware to whom we shall owe any effort that may perchance be made on her behalf.'

'But you know, Mr. Elvin—'

'I call myself Professor Elvin,' the eloquent fencing-master observed, with a deprecatory movement of his hand and a melancholy smile that seemed to say, 'I know it is a weakness, I

know it is not a legal claim ; yet prythee indulge me in at least this poor conceit.'

'I beg pardon ; of course I should have said Professor Elvin ; you know that I do not even pretend to be a qualified judge of singing.'

Professor Elvin made a gesture of earnest protestation, as if to imply that there really could be nothing in musical or any other science concerning which Mrs. Vanthorpe was not a perfectly competent critic, authority, and judge.

'No ; I really know very little about it, not nearly enough to make me even fancy myself qualified to have a decided opinion ; and in any case I should be carried away by my inclinations, and your sister would seem to me to be Patti or Nilsson if I were on her side, as I am.'

'But excuse me,' the Professor said with a smile, 'Patti or Nilsson ! We hope to show you that Gertrude has much higher pretensions than to be classed with singers like Patti or Nilsson.'

'I don't think anything of Patti or Nilsson,' the aspirant herself said, in her low thrilling tone. 'They belong to a school with which I have no sympathy ; I say so quite apart from any feeling of resentment which I might be justified in entertaining.'

'You see, then,' Gabrielle resumed, 'this only shows how little qualified I am to judge. I thought these were two great singers.'

'You are very good, Mrs. Vanthorpe,' the Professor observed. The comment was intended to imply that it was only out of sheer goodness of heart that Mrs. Vanthorpe condescended to regard such persons as singers at all.

'Then you see,' said Gabrielle, 'I cannot answer for Mr. Taxal's judgment. He perhaps may form a different opinion, Professor Elvin, from that which you and I form. We can't tell ; we shall have to wait until—until——'

'Until he has heard Gertrude ? Certainly, Mrs. Vanthorpe ; that is what we desire ; that is all we desire. We have no fear of the judgment of one so qualified as Mr. Taxal, although he is but an amateur. Gertrude only longs for an opportunity of proving to Mr. Taxal that she is not unworthy of your countenance and recommendation.'

'I am not afraid of the issue,' the aspirant said, first casting her eyes down and then suddenly turning all the light of them full on Gabrielle's face.

'Here is Mr. Taxal, just come in time,' Gabrielle said, delighted that he had come, and delighted too with the courage, the confidence, and the deep bright eyes of the aspirant. 'It is like that I

would have a woman,' she thought; 'brave, strong, confident in her powers when she has them.'

Walter Taxal came forward somewhat awkward and timid-looking, and he positively blushed as he was presented to Miss Elvin, and she, having first dropped her eyes on the ground, then raised them to his and fixed him with an imploring gaze. No time was lost in making the experiment. The aspirant sat down to the piano and accompanied herself; her brother turned the leaves of the piece of music which she had chosen. Walter Taxal's short sight rendered his undertaking such a task a dangerous experiment; and moreover Professor Elvin had gently urged that, to appreciate his sister's singing, the mind should be absolutely free from the strain of any duty, however welcome and graceful. Gabrielle stood behind the singer, full at once of fear and hope. Professor Elvin turned over each leaf with the action of a man delivering a final and triumphant thrust to some rival swordsman.

The singing? Well, Miss Elvin had a voice of tremendous power and compass. There was a raw keen raucous energy about it that at first was positively startling. The little glass drops of the chandelier all rattled and echoed as the first notes played in among them. The strings of a harp at the other end of the room vibrated shrilly. The leaves of open books fluttered and rustled like startled birds. The room seemed to be filled to painful distention with the volume of sound; the singer herself appeared to be possessed by her voice like a sibyl with the prophetic fury. Every limb of her moved; every bone and muscle seemed to be in corresponding motion as the sounds came forth. Her shoulders, her arms, her back, her knees, all were agitated together; not a vein was quiet; the contortions of the sibyl at least were there. When she finished, it was as though she flung voice and song away from her with a passionate energy, like that of Atlas sick of his burden and tossing a world into unending space. Then there was silence, and Professor Elvin fell into an attitude and waited. Gabrielle fixed her eyes beseechingly on Walter Taxal.

'Great power, great power, quite a tremendous organ; no doubt about that,' he said, after a moment's pause. 'This young lady is to be congratulated, really to be congratulated, on the possession of such a voice.'

'Not many like that, sir, on the lyric stage now,' Professor Elvin said defiantly.

'Not many like it; oh, no, certainly not; very rare, I am quite sure. Yes; the voice is all right enough. A little more, perhaps, of culture, don't you think? Perhaps a certain want of train-



'This young lady is to be congratulated on the possession of such a voice.'



ing may be evident at times. The young lady has not been taught in Italy, perhaps?’

‘No, sir, she has not,’ her brother said sternly.

‘I would suggest,’ Taxal went on, in a deprecating and even timid tone, ‘if it could be arranged, you know, that before venturing on a trial at the hands of any of our great people here—our managers, you know—she should have some little finishing training in Italy. People think so much of Italy; partly a superstition, I dare say, but it might perhaps be well to give in to it.’

‘Then you don’t think my sister is fit to take a place on the lyric stage at once?’

‘Well, I don’t exactly say that; and you must understand that my opinion is that of a mere amateur. I don’t pretend to a decisive judgment of any kind; but I would suggest that a little more training would be well. We can’t suffer, you know, from a little more training at any time.’

Miss Elvin rose from the piano.

‘I might say,’ she said with downcast eyes, ‘that a singer is hardly able to do justice to herself with an instrument like that. It is an excellent piano for all ordinary purposes, I am sure; but it is hardly the instrument for an artist.’

‘Oh, no,’ Gabrielle interposed, seizing the opportunity for coming to the rescue; ‘that piano is nothing that a really great artist ought to touch. I felt all the time that it was not quite fair to Miss Elvin to ask her to sing to it. But I was so anxious to hear her, that I could not wait for a better time.’

‘Mrs. Vanthorpe is all goodness,’ Professor Elvin said in the tone of one who tenders to his wronger a Christian but reluctant forgiveness.

‘Oh, I probably could not have done any better in any case,’ Miss Elvin said bitterly.

There was another pause. Everyone felt depressed and awkward. At last Walter Taxal hit upon something to say. He happily remembered that there was to be a concert given in a few days at Lady Honeybell’s, in aid of the cause of independence in Thibet, and he thought it would be a capital thing if Miss Elvin were to sing there. It would be a great opportunity. Everyone would be there; some of the most famous singers had promised their assistance, and many of the greatest patrons of art, professional and amateur, would be among the audience. If Miss Elvin made an impression there, it would be a splendid opening for her. He was sure he could promise that Lady Honeybell would be delighted to enrol Miss Elvin on her list of singers. He would be able to let Miss Elvin know to-morrow.

This happy thought went far to restore satisfaction to the company. Professor Elvin was profuse and statuesque in his manner of returning thanks. Miss Elvin expressed her gratitude with the carefully humbled air of one who submits to being misprised, and wishes it to be understood that, after what has passed, she admits that anything is good enough for her. Gabrielle insisted that for that night at least Miss Elvin must stay with her, as it was too far for her to go home with her brother and return next morning in time to hear the good news which Mr. Taxal was sure to bring about Lady Honeybell and the concert. Gertrude grew brighter at this, and accepted the offer readily. While she spoke a few words to her brother about some commissions he was to execute for her as he was passing through town, Walter Taxal found an opportunity of exchanging a sentence or two with Gabrielle.

'I hope you are satisfied with what I have said and done for your *protégée*?' he asked.

'Only half satisfied,' Gabrielle replied. 'At least, I like what you have done very well, but not what you said. You don't appear to me to be half enthusiastic enough. The poor girl was quite cast down; there were tears in her eyes.'

'Well, but really, you know, one must not go too far in praising beginners. You have no idea of how self-conceited some of these people are, and what impossible notions they get into their heads.'

'But surely she has a wonderful voice? Come, you must admit that much, at least.'

'Yes; she has a wonderful voice—very wonderful; that's exactly the word for it. I never heard anything like it; but whether it's going to be wonderfully good or wonderfully bad is what I don't quite profess to know. And look here, Mrs. Vanthorpe, excuse me; don't you take too much trouble about these people; they'll not be grateful to you one bit. You have no idea what such self-conceit can do. That fellow's a cad, depend upon it; he thinks he can trade upon his sister's voice.'

'I am sorry you take it in that way,' Gabrielle said, disappointed. 'I had set my heart on getting that poor girl a chance to be heard, and I know she will succeed. What do I care about her brother or his manners? I feel for the girl; I am sure she has genius; I know she has, and I only wish I could do something for her.'

'Well, we'll all try to do something for her,' Taxal said, in great alarm lest he should have offended Gabrielle, and wishing he had given it as his opinion that Miss Elvin had gifts more promising than those of any songstress since Malibran. 'I am only

afraid of encouraging too much hope, letting her in for disappointment and all that.'

'Men have no sympathy but with the successful,' said Gabrielle sententiously, and forgetting at the moment that the man before her had hardly ever in his life been the advocate of any but some lost and hopeless cause.

'Oh, come, Mrs. Vanthorpe, you must really think a little better of us; and in this case I will do all I can; I'll move heaven and earth, in fact, to show you that I am not so bad as all that, and that I have sympathy with merit even before it succeeds.'

At this moment one of Gabrielle's maids brought her a card from Mr. Lefussis.

'You have done too much for me to-day already,' said Gabrielle. 'Can you stand Mr. Lefussis?'

'Mr. Anybody for you. I am only too glad to have a chance of making up for my comparative failure to satisfy you as to your musical friend.'

Mr. Lefussis entered, bowing to Gabrielle with ancient grace, and still carrying his hat somehow as if it were one proper to the courtly costume of a Beauclerk or a Wyndham. He had hardly begun to pay his formal respects when she was informed that Mr. and Mrs. Robert Charlton had come, and were waiting below. This was indeed the evening for which Gabrielle had invited our friends, and she had not forgotten the invitation; but she had certainly failed to observe how time was flying in her various other occupations. It was now seven o'clock. She seemed to the kindly Walter to be a little embarrassed by the simultaneous appearance of such a little crowd of visitors. He glanced significantly at Lefussis and then at Gabrielle, and his look clearly asked her, 'Shall I take him away?' and her reply, conveyed too in one quiet glance, said, 'Oh, yes, if you can.' Gabrielle introduced him to Lefussis with becoming dignity of manner.

'I begged Mrs. Vanthorpe to be kind enough to introduce me,' Walter said, 'although I think you and I have met before, Mr. Lefussis. We have been engaged in the same good cause, I know, more than once. Now, Mrs. Vanthorpe has promised to excuse me, and I hope you will excuse me too; I have to speak at a meeting in the East-end to night, and there is only just time to get a hasty scrap of dinner at my club as I go along. If you don't mind coming with me, we can jump into a cab, get a morsel of dinner, and you shall accompany me to the meeting, and we can talk over the things you want to speak of as we go along.'

Never was a man more delighted than Mr. Lefussis. He did

not even stop to complete the explanation he was beginning to give concerning the lateness of his visit, and the delays which had unavoidably made it so late. He took a grateful but hurried farewell of Gabrielle, and went off with Taxal, feeling as if he were suddenly restored to that delightful world of political movement and of brilliant names from which he had long been an exile. As Walter was disappearing, he cast one glance back upon Gabrielle, which seemed to have almost as much meaning in it as the cry that the soldier rushing into battle sends back to his great chief, 'You shall praise me this time, O Cæsar.'

Descending the stairs, they met Robert Charlton and Janet. Mr. Lefussis could not refrain from stopping to exchange a word with them in the pride of his heart.

'Glad to see you; haven't a moment to spare. I am just going to dine with young Taxal, Lord Taxal's son; we have to attend a very important meeting afterwards. Tell you all about it to-morrow. Good-bye.'

'Fool!' was the murmured observation of Charlton as his friend hurried after Walter Taxal. 'I am sorry we came here, Janet,' he muttered to his wife as they were being shown up-stairs.

(To be continued.)

BELGRAVIA ANNUAL

CHRISTMAS 1878.

A Shocking Story.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

I.

I HEAR that the 'shocking story of my conduct' was widely circulated at the ball, and that public opinion (among the ladies), in every part of the room, declared I had disgraced myself.

But there was one dissentient voice in this chorus of general condemnation. You spoke, Madam, with all the authority of your wide celebrity and your high rank. You said:—'I am personally a stranger to the young lady who is the subject of remark—I am not even acquainted with her name. If I venture to interfere, it is only to remind you that there are two sides to every story. May I ask, in the interests of mercy, if you have waited to pass sentence on her until you have heard what she has to say in her own defence?'

These just and generous words produced (if I am correctly informed) a dead silence. Not one of the women who had condemned me had heard me in my own defence. Not one of them ventured to answer you.

How I may stand in the opinions of such persons as these, is a matter of perfect indifference to me. Not because I am a woman of extraordinary fortitude, but because I shall soon be beyond the reach of London gossip and London scandal. My good husband has received a foreign appointment which places us in an honourable and independent position. We leave England in a few days; and we are not likely to return to our own country for some years to come. Under these circumstances, may I speak of my heartfelt gratitude? may I own how anxious I am to stand well in *your* opinion? I cannot contemplate my approaching departure, without feeling *eager to satisfy* you that I am not unworthy of the *interest you have taken in seeing* justice done to a stranger. I shall

be so proud of bearing away with me even the most trifling expression of your sympathy! Will you read my little story, and decide for yourself if I deserve the hard things that have been said of me? Yes, I am sure you will!

II.

Who am I—to begin with?

I suppose I shall best answer that question by describing myself as one of the fortunate persons who are possessed of advantages of birth. My father was the second son of an English nobleman. My mother was the lineal descendant of one of the oldest families in South Germany. I lost both my parents when I was sixteen years old; and I went to live with my uncle (my father's younger brother), who was also appointed my guardian until I came of age. His wife (my aunt by marriage) brought him a handsome fortune. She, too, belonged to the higher rank of society.

You will find, as I go on, that I abstain from mentioning any family names. The motives which—if they did not absolutely lead to my marriage—did certainly hasten it, are connected with the discovery of an event which must never be traced to the persons concerned in it. For this reason I have marked my narrative 'private;' and I trust to you not to let it be seen by other eyes than yours. If I mention my uncle by his military title, as 'the General,' and if I change my aunt's Christian name, I shall keep a secret which I feel bound by the strongest motives of gratitude and honour to respect—and, at the same time, I shall place my position before you unreservedly in its true aspect. To have done all the sooner with the troublesome question of names, I may add that I bear my German mother's Christian name, 'Wilhelmina.' All my friends, in the days when I had friends, used to shorten this to 'Mina.' Be my friend so far, and call me Mina, too.

My troubles began with—what do you think? With nothing better and nothing worse than the engagement of a new groom.

This seems, no doubt, a very odd way of appealing to your interest, at the outset of my story. Fortunately, I am writing to a just woman, who will suspend her opinion until she knows a little more of me.

We were in London for the season. At the time I am now speaking of, I had lived for five years under the protection of my uncle and aunt. When I think of the good General's fatherly kindness to me, I despair of writing about it in any adequate terms. To own the truth, the tears get into my eyes, and I cannot write

at all. As for my relations with Lady Catherine, I only do her justice if I say that she performed her duties towards me without the slightest pretension, and in the most charming manner. At past forty years old she was still universally admired, though she had lost the one attraction which distinguished her before my time—the attraction of a perfectly beautiful figure. With fine hair and expressive eyes, she was otherwise a plain woman. Her unassuming cleverness and her fascinating manners were the qualities no doubt which made her popular everywhere. We never quarrelled. Not because I was always amiable, but because Lady Catherine would not allow it. She managed me as she managed her husband, with perfect tact. With certain occasional checks—exceptions which only proved the rule—she absolutely governed the General. There were eccentricities in his character which made him a man easily ruled by a clever woman. Deferring to his opinion, so far as appearances went, my aunt generally contrived to get her own way in the end. Except when he was at his club, happy in his gossip, his good dinners, and his whist, my excellent uncle lived under a despotism, in the happy delusion that he was master in his own house.

Prosperous and pleasant as it appears on the surface, my life had its sad side for a young woman.

In the commonplace routine of our existence, as wealthy people in the upper rank, there was nothing to ripen the growth of the better and deeper capacities in my nature. Heartily as I loved and admired my uncle, he was neither of an age nor of a character to be the chosen depository of my most secret thoughts, the friend of my inmost heart, who could show me how to make the best and the most of my life. With friends and admirers in plenty, I had found no one who could hold this position towards me. In the midst of society I was, unconsciously, a lonely woman. My happiest moments were those moments when I took refuge in my music and my books. Out of the house, my one diversion, always welcome, and always fresh, was riding. Without any false modesty, I may mention that I had lovers as well as admirers; but not one of them produced an impression on my heart. In all that related to the tender passion, as it is called, I was an undeveloped being. The influence that men have on women, *because* they are men, was really and truly a mystery to me. I was ashamed of my own coldness—I tried, honestly tried, to copy other girls; to feel my heart beating in the presence of the one chosen man, as it did certainly beat, for example, when I went out hunting with the General. But it was not to be done. When a man pressed my hand, I felt it in my rings, instead of my heart.

Don't suppose I am writing in this way about myself, out of mere vanity. I am trying to prepare you for what is to come. If I can only enable you to see some of the defects and weaknesses of my character, as clearly as I can now see them myself, you will, I think, feel more indulgently towards me when I make my confession. And perhaps you will be all the readier to remember that I had neither mother nor sister to confide in, at a time when I most wanted a word of advice.

This said, I have now done with the past, and may get on to the strange events which have associated themselves with a later time.

III.

I HAVE mentioned that we were in London for the season. One morning, I went out riding with my uncle, as usual, in Hyde Park.

The General's service in the army had been in a cavalry regiment—service distinguished by merits which justified his rapid rise to the high places in his profession. In the hunting-field, he was noted as one of the most daring and most accomplished riders in our county. He had always delighted in riding young and high-spirited horses; and the habit remained with him after he had quitted the active duties of his profession in later life. From first to last he had met with no accidents worth remembering, until the unlucky morning when he went out with me. His horse, a fiery chestnut, ran away with him, in that part of the Park-ride called Rotten Row. With the purpose of keeping clear of other riders, he spurred his runaway horse at the rail which divides the Row from the grassy enclosure at its side. The terrified animal swerved in taking the leap, and dashed him against a tree. He was dreadfully shaken and injured; but his strong constitution carried him through to recovery—with the serious drawback of an incurable lameness in one leg. The doctors, on taking leave of their patient, united in warning him (at his age, and bearing in mind his weakened leg) to ride no more restive horses. 'A quiet cob, General,' they all suggested. My uncle was sorely mortified and offended. 'If I am fit for nothing but a quiet cob,' he said bitterly, 'I will ride no more.' He kept his word. No one ever saw the General on horseback again.

Under these sad circumstances (and my aunt being no horse-woman), I had apparently no other choice than to give up riding also. But my kind-hearted uncle was not the man to let me be sacrificed to this disappointment. His own riding-groom had

been one of his soldier-servants in the cavalry regiment—a quaint, sour-tempered old man, not at all the sort of person to attend on a young lady taking her riding-exercise alone. ‘We must find a smart fellow who can be trusted,’ said the General. ‘I shall inquire at the club.’

For a week afterwards, a succession of grooms, recommended by friends, applied for the vacant place.

The General found insurmountable objections to all of them. ‘I’ll tell you what I have done,’ he announced one day, with the air of a man who had hit on a grand discovery; ‘I have advertised in the papers.’

Lady Catherine looked up from her embroidery with the placid smile that was peculiar to her. ‘I don’t quite like advertising for a servant,’ she said. ‘You are at the mercy of a stranger; you don’t know that you are not engaging a drunkard or a thief.’

‘Or you may be deceived by a false character,’ I added, on my side. I seldom ventured, at domestic consultations, on giving my opinion unasked—but the new groom represented a subject in which I felt a strong personal interest. In a certain sense, he was to be *my* groom.

‘I’m much obliged to you both for warning me that I am so easy to deceive,’ the General remarked satirically. ‘Unfortunately, the mischief is done. Three men have answered my advertisement already. I expect them here to-morrow to be examined for the place.’

Lady Catherine looked up from her embroidery again. ‘Are you going to see them yourself?’ she asked softly. ‘I thought the steward——’

‘I have hitherto considered myself a better judge of a groom than my steward,’ the General interposed. ‘However, don’t be alarmed; I won’t act on my own sole responsibility, after the hint you have given me. You and Mina shall lend me your valuable assistance, and discover whether they are thieves, drunkards, and what not, before I feel the smallest suspicion of it, myself.’

IV.

WE naturally supposed that the General was joking. No. This was one of those rare occasions on which my aunt’s tact—infallible in matters of importance—proved to be at fault in a trifle. My uncle’s self-esteem had been touched in a tender place; and he had resolved to make us feel it. The next morning a polite message came, requesting our presence in the library, to see the grooms. My aunt (always ready with her smile, but rarely

tempted into laughing outright) did for once laugh heartily. 'It is really too ridiculous!' she said. However, she pursued her policy of always yielding, in the first instance. We went together to the library.

The three grooms were received in the order in which they presented themselves for approval. Two of them bore the ineffaceable mark of the public-house so plainly written on their villanous faces, that even I could see it. My uncle ironically asked us to favour him with our opinions. Lady Catherine answered with her sweetest smile: 'Pardon me, General—we are here to learn.' The words were nothing; but the manner in which they were spoken was perfect. Few men could have resisted that gentle influence—and the General was not one of the few. He stroked his moustache, and returned to his petticoat government. The two grooms were dismissed.

On the entry of the third and last man, we all three opened our eyes with the same sensation of surprise.

If the stranger's short coat and tight trousers had not proclaimed his vocation in life, we should have taken it for granted that there had been some mistake, and that we were favoured with a visit from a gentleman unknown. He was between dark and light in complexion, with frank clear blue eyes; quiet, modest, intelligent-looking; slim in his figure; easy in his movements; respectful in his manner, but perfectly free from servility. 'I say!' the General blurted out, addressing my aunt confidentially, '*he* looks as if he would do, doesn't he?'

I expected to see Lady Catherine's invariable smile. For once, the smile seemed to be not ready. 'It rests with you to decide,' she answered in lower tones than usual.

'Step forward, my man,' said the General. The groom advanced from the door, bowed, and stopped at the foot of the table—my uncle sitting at the head, with my aunt and myself on either side of him. The inevitable questions began.

'What is your name?'

'Michael Bloomfield.'

'Your age?'

'Twenty-six.'

My aunt's interest in the proceedings seemed to be slackening already. A little weary sigh escaped her. She leaned back resignedly in her chair.

The General went on with his questions:—'What experience have you had as a groom?'

'I began learning my work, sir, before I was twelve years old.'

'Yes! yes! I mean, what private families have you served in?'

‘Two, sir.’

‘How long have you been in your two situations?’

‘Four years in the first; and three in the second.’

The General looked agreeably surprised. ‘Seven years in only two situations is a good character in itself,’ he remarked. ‘Who are your references?’

The groom laid two papers on the table.

‘I don’t take written references,’ said the General.

‘Be pleased to read my papers, sir,’ answered the groom.

My uncle looked sharply across the table. The groom sustained the look with respectful but unshaken composure. The General took up the papers, and seemed to be once more favourably impressed as he read them. ‘Personal references, in each case if required, in support of strong written recommendations from both his employers,’ he informed my aunt. ‘Copy the addresses, Mina. Very satisfactory, I must say. Don’t you think so yourself?’ he resumed, turning again to my aunt.

Lady Catherine replied by a courteous bend of her head. She looked at the groom absently, like a person whose mind was otherwise occupied. The General went on with his questions. They related to the management of horses; and they were answered to his complete satisfaction. ‘Michael Bloomfield, you know your business,’ he said, ‘and you have a good character. Leave your address. When I have consulted your references, you shall hear from me.’

The groom took out a blank card, and wrote his name and address on it. I looked over my uncle’s shoulder when he received the card. Another surprise! The handwriting was simply irreproachable—the lines running perfectly straight, and every letter completely formed. As this perplexing person made his modest bow, and withdrew, the General, struck by an after-thought, called him back from the door.

‘One thing more,’ said my uncle. ‘About friends and followers? I consider it my duty to my servants to allow them to see their relations; but I expect them to submit to certain conditions in return——’

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ the groom interposed. ‘I shall not give you any trouble on that score. I have no relations.’

‘No brothers or sisters?’ asked the General.

‘None, sir.’

‘Father and mother both dead?’

‘I don’t know, sir.’

‘You don’t know! What does that mean?’

‘I am telling you the plain truth, sir. I must have had a

father and mother, of course. But I never heard who they were—and I don't expect to hear now.'

He said those words with a bitter composure which impressed me painfully. Lady Catherine was far from feeling it as I did. Her languid interest in the engagement of the groom seemed to be completely exhausted—and that was all. She rose, in her easy graceful way, and looked out of window at the courtyard and fountain, the house-dog in his kennel, and the stable doors beyond. My uncle's eyes followed her; he asked if she were tired. Her back was turned on him, in the position which she now occupied. She only answered, 'No,' without looking round.

During this interval, the groom remained near the table, respectfully waiting for his dismissal. The General spoke to him sharply, for the first time. I could see that my good uncle had noticed the cruel tone of that passing reference to the parents, and thought of it as I did.

'One word more, before you go,' he said. 'If I don't find you more mercifully inclined towards my horses than you seem to be towards your father and mother, you won't remain long in my service. You might have told me you had never heard who your parents were, without speaking as if you didn't care to hear.'

'May I say a bold word, sir, in my own defence?'

He put the question very quietly, but, at the same time, so firmly that he even surprised my aunt. She looked round from the window—then turned back again, and stretched out her hand towards the curtain, intending as I supposed to alter the arrangement of it. The groom went on.

'May I ask, sir, why I should care about a father and mother who deserted me? Mind what you are about, my lady!' he cried, —suddenly addressing my aunt. 'There's a cat in the folds of that curtain; she might frighten you.'

He had barely said the words, before the housekeeper's large tabby cat, taking its noonday siesta in the looped-up fold of the curtain, leaped out and made for the door. In spite of the warning, Lady Catherine *was* frightened. A faint cry escaped her; she sank into the nearest chair. 'Let the creature out,' she whispered to me. 'This will not happen again,' she added, reassuring the General by a faint smile. 'The housekeeper shall give up her cat, or give up her situation.'

She rose, and, advancing to the table, addressed herself to the groom for the first time. Towards her inferiors in social position her manner was perfect; always considerate and kind, without *ever* touching the objectionable extremes of undue familiarity on *one* side, or of undue condescension on the other. When she

spoke to the groom, she amazed me. She was so haughty and so ungracious that I declare I hardly recognised her!

‘Did you see the cat?’ she asked.

‘No, my lady.’

‘Then, how did you know the creature was in the curtain?’

For the first time since he had entered the room, the groom looked a little confused. ‘It’s a sort of presumption for a man in my position to be subject to a nervous infirmity,’ he answered. ‘I am one of those persons (the weakness is not uncommon, as your ladyship is aware) who know by their own unpleasant sensations when a cat is in the room. I believe the ‘antipathy,’ as the gentlefolks call it, must have been born in me. As long as I can remember——’

My aunt turned to the General, without attempting to conceal that she took no sort of interest in the groom’s remembrances. ‘Haven’t you done with the man yet?’ she asked. The General started at the unusual abruptness of her tone, and gave the groom his dismissal. ‘You shall hear from me in three days’ time. Good morning.’

Michael Bloomfield looked at my aunt for a moment with steady attention, and left the room.

V.

‘You don’t mean to engage that man?’ said Lady Catherine, as the door closed.

‘Why not?’ asked my uncle, looking very much surprised.

‘I have taken a dislike to him.’

This short sharp answer was so entirely out of the character of my aunt, that the General took her kindly by the hand, and said, ‘I am afraid you are not well.’

She irritably withdrew her hand. ‘I don’t feel well. It doesn’t matter.’

‘It does matter, Catherine. What can I do for you?’

‘Write to the man——’ She paused and smiled contemptuously. ‘Imagine a groom with an antipathy to cats!’ she said, turning to me. ‘Write,’ she resumed, addressing her husband, ‘and tell him to look for another place.’

‘What objection can I make to him?’ the General asked helplessly.

‘Good heavens! can’t you make an excuse? Say he is too young.’

My uncle looked at me in expressive silence—walked slowly to the *writing-table*—and glanced at his wife, in the faint hope that

she might change her mind. Their eyes met—and she seemed to recover the command of her temper. The famous smile that fascinated everybody made its appearance again. She put her hand caressingly on the General's shoulder. 'I remember the time,' she said softly, 'when any caprice of mine was a command to you. Ah, I was younger then!'

The General's reception of this little advance was thoroughly characteristic of him. He first kissed Lady Catherine's hand, and then he wrote the letter. My aunt rewarded him by a look, and left the library.

'What the deuce is the matter with her?' my uncle said to me, when we were alone. 'Do you dislike the man too?'

'Certainly not. So far as I can judge, he appears to be just the sort of person we want.'

'And knows thoroughly well how to manage horses, my dear. What *can* be Lady Catherine's objection to him?'

As the words passed his lips, Lady Catherine opened the library door.

'I am so ashamed of myself,' she said sweetly. 'At my age, I have been behaving like a spoilt child. How good you are to me, General! Let me try to make amends for my misconduct. Will you permit me?'

She took up the General's letter, without waiting for permission; tore it to pieces, smiling pleasantly all the while; and threw the fragments into the waste-paper basket. 'As if you didn't know better than I do!' she said, kissing him on the forehead. 'Engage the man by all means.'

She left the room for the second time. For the second time my uncle looked at me in blank perplexity—and I looked back at him in the same condition of mind. The sound of the luncheon bell was equally a relief to both of us. Not a word more was spoken on the subject of the new groom. His references were verified; and he entered the General's service in three days' time.

VI.

ALWAYS careful in anything that concerned my welfare, no matter how trifling it might be, my uncle did not trust me alone with the new groom when he first entered our service. Two old friends of the General accompanied me at his special request, and reported the man to be perfectly competent and trustworthy. After that, Michael rode out with me alone; my friends among young ladies seldom caring to accompany me, when I abandoned the Park for the quiet country roads, on the north and west of

London. Was it wrong in me to talk to him on these expeditions? It would surely have been treating a man like a brute never to take the smallest notice of him—especially as his conduct was uniformly respectful towards me. Not once, by word or look, did he presume on the position which my favour permitted him to occupy.

Ought I to blush, when I confess (though he was only a groom) that he interested me?

In the first place, there was something romantic in the very blankness of the story of his life. He had been left, in his infancy, in the stables of a gentleman living in Kent, near the high-road between Gravesend and Rochester. The same day, the stable-boy had met a woman running out of the yard, pursued by the dog. She was a stranger and was not well dressed. While the boy was protecting her by chaining the dog to his kennel, she was quick enough to place herself beyond the reach of pursuit. The infant's clothing proved, on examination, to be of the finest linen. He was warmly wrapt in a beautiful shawl of some foreign manufacture, entirely unknown to all the persons present, including the master and mistress of the house. Among the folds of the shawl there was discovered a letter, without date, signature, or address, which it was presumed the woman must have forgotten. Like the shawl, the paper was of foreign manufacture. The handwriting presented a strongly marked character; and the composition plainly revealed the mistakes of a person imperfectly acquainted with the English language. The contents of the letter merely related to the means supplied for the support of the child. Instead of paying the money by instalments, the writer had committed the folly of enclosing a sum of a hundred pounds in one remittance. At the close of the letter, an appointment was made for a meeting, in six months' time, on the eastward side of London Bridge. The stable-boy's description of the woman who had passed him showed that she belonged to the lower class. To such a person a hundred pounds would be a fortune. She had, no doubt, abandoned the child, and made off with the money. No trace of her was ever found. On the day of the appointment the police watched the eastward side of London Bridge without making any discovery. Through the kindness of the gentleman in whose stables he had been found, the first ten years of the boy's life were passed under the protection of a charitable asylum. They gave him the name of one of the little inmates who had died; and they sent him out to service before he was eleven years old. He was harshly treated, and ran away; wandered to some training-stables near Newmarket; attracted the favourable notice of the head-groom, was

employed among the other boys, and liked the occupation. Growing up to manhood, he had taken service in private families as a groom. Such was the record of twenty-six years of his life!

Taking him apart from his story, there was something in the man himself which attracted attention, and made one think of him in his absence.

For example, there was a spirit of resistance to his destiny in him, which is very rarely found in serving-men of his order. I might never have known this, if the General had not asked me to accompany him in one of his periodical visits of inspection to the stables. He was so well satisfied, that he proposed extending his investigations to the groom's own room. 'If you don't object, Michael?' he added, with his customary consideration for the self-respect of all persons in his employment. Michael's colour rose a little; he looked at me. 'I am afraid the young lady will not find my room quite so tidy as it ought to be,' he said as he opened the door for us.

The only disorder in the groom's room was produced, to our surprise, by the groom's books and papers. Cheap editions of the English poets, translations of Latin and Greek classics, handbooks for teaching French and German 'without a master,' selections from the great French and German writers, carefully written 'exercises' in both languages, manuals of short-hand, with more 'exercises' in that art, were scattered over the table, round the central object of a reading-lamp, which spoke plainly of studies by night. 'Why, what is all this?' cried the General. 'Are you going to leave me, Michael, and set up a school?' Michael answered in sad submissive tones. 'I try to improve myself, sir—though I sometimes lose heart and hope.' 'Hope of what?' asked my uncle. 'Are you not content to be a servant? Must you rise in the world, as the saying is?' The groom shrank a little at that abrupt question. 'If I had relations to care for me and help me along the hard ways of life,' he said, 'I might be satisfied, sir, to remain as I am. As it is, I have no one to think about but myself—and I am fool enough sometimes to look beyond myself.' So far, I had kept silence; but I could no longer resist giving him a word of encouragement—his confession was so sadly and so patiently made. 'You speak too harshly of yourself,' I said; 'the best and greatest men have begun like you by looking beyond themselves.' For a moment our eyes met. I admired the poor lonely fellow trying so modestly and so bravely to teach himself—and I did not care to conceal it. He was the first to look away; some suppressed emotion turned him deadly pale. Was I the cause of it? I felt myself tremble as that bold question came

into my mind. The General, with one sharp glance at me, diverted the talk (not very delicately, as I thought) to the misfortune of Michael's birth. 'I have heard of your being deserted in our infancy by some woman unknown,' he said. 'What has become of the things you were wrapped in, and the letter that was bound on you? They might lead to a discovery, one of these days.' The groom smiled. 'The last master I served thought of it as you do, sir. He was so good as to write to the gentleman who was first burdened with the care of me—and the things were sent to me in return.' He took up an unlocked leather bag, which opened by touching a brass knob, and showed us the shawl, the linen (sadly faded by time), and the letter. We were puzzled by the shawl. My uncle, who had served in the East, thought it looked like a very rare kind of Persian work. We examined with interest the letter, and the fine linen. When Michael quietly remarked, as we handed them back to him, 'They keep the secret, you see,' we could only look at each other, and own there was nothing more to be said.

VII.

THAT night, lying awake thinking, I made my first discovery of a great change that had come over me. I can only describe my sensations in the trite phrase—I felt like a new woman.

Never yet had my life been so enjoyable to me as it was now. I was conscious of a delicious lightness of heart. The simplest things pleased me; I was ready to be kind to everybody, and to admire everything. Even the familiar scenery of my rides in the park developed beauties which I had never noticed before. The enchantments of music affected me to tears. I was absolutely in love with my dogs and my birds—and, as for my maid, I bewildered the girl with presents, and gave her holidays almost before she could ask for them. In a bodily sense, I felt an extraordinary accession of strength and activity. I romped with the dear old General, and actually kissed Lady Catherine, one morning, instead of letting her kiss me as usual. My friends noticed my new outburst of gaiety and spirit—and wondered what had produced it. Is there any limit to the self-deception of which a human being is capable? I can honestly say that I wondered too! Only on that wakeful night which followed our visit to Michael's room, did I feel myself on the way to a clear understanding of the truth. The next morning completed the process of enlightenment. I went out riding as usual. The instant when Michael put his hand under my foot as I sprang into the saddle,

his touch flew all over me like a flame. I knew who had made a new woman of me, from that moment.

As to describing the first sense of confusion that overwhelmed me, even if I were a practised writer, I should be incapable of doing it. I pulled down my veil, and rode on in a sort of trance. Fortunately for me, our house looked on the Park, and I had only to cross the road. Otherwise, I should certainly have met with some accident among the passing vehicles. To this day, I don't know where I rode. The horse went his own way quietly—and the groom followed me.

The groom! There is, I suppose, no civilised human creature so free from the hateful and anti-Christian pride of rank as a woman who loves with all her heart and soul, for the first time in her life. I only tell the truth (in however unfavourable a light it may place me) when I declare that my confusion was entirely due to the discovery that I was in love. I was not ashamed of myself for being in love with the groom. I had given my heart to the *man*. What did the accident of his position matter? Put money into his pockets and a title before his name—by another accident: in speech, manners, and attainments, he would be a gentleman worthy of his wealth and worthy of his rank. Even the natural dread of what my relations and friends might say, if they discovered my secret, seemed, in the entirely pure and entirely exalted state of my feelings, to be a sensation so unworthy of me and of him, that I looked round, and called to him to speak to me, and asked him questions about horses, which kept him riding nearly side by side with me. Ah, how I enjoyed the gentle deference and respect of his manner as he answered me! He was hardly bold enough to raise his eyes to mine, when I looked at him. Absorbed in the Paradise of my own making, I rode on slowly, and was only aware that friends had passed and recognised me, by seeing him touch his hat. I looked round and discovered the women smiling ironically as they rode by. That one circumstance roused me rudely from my dream. I let Michael fall back again to his proper place, and quickened my horse's pace; angry with myself, angry with the world in general—then suddenly changing, and being fool enough and child enough to feel ready to cry. How long these varying moods lasted, I don't know. On returning, I slipped off my horse without waiting for Michael to help me, and ran into the house without even wishing him 'Good day.'

VIII.

AFTER taking off my riding-habit, and cooling my hot face with eau-de-cologne and water, I went down to the room which we called the morning-room. The piano there was my favourite instrument—and I had the idea of trying what music would do towards helping me to compose myself.

As I sat down before the piano, I heard the opening of the door of the breakfast-room (separated from me by a curtained hallway), and the voice of Lady Catherine asking if Michael had returned to the stables. On the servant's reply in the affirmative, he desired that he might be sent to her immediately. No doubt, I ought either to have left the morning-room, or to have let my aunt know of my presence there. I did neither the one or the other. The inveterate dislike that she had taken to Michael had, to all appearances, subsided. She had once or twice actually taken opportunities of speaking to him kindly. I believed this was due to the caprice of the moment. The tone of her voice too suggested, on this occasion, that she had some spiteful object in view, in sending for him. I deliberately waited to hear what passed between them.

Lady Catherine began.

'You were out riding to-day with Miss Mina?'

'Yes, my lady.'

'Turn to the light. I wish to see people when I speak to them.—You were observed by some friends of mine; your conduct excited remark. Do you know your business as a lady's groom?'

'I have had seven years' experience, my lady.'

'Your business is to ride at a certain distance behind your mistress. Has your experience taught you that?'

'Yes, my lady.'

'You were not riding behind Miss Mina—your horse was almost side by side with hers. Do you deny it?'

'No, my lady.'

'You behaved with the greatest impropriety—you were seen talking to Miss Mina. Do you deny that?'

'No, my lady.'

'Leave the room. No! come back. Have you any excuse to make?'

'None, my lady.'

'Your insolence is intolerable! I shall speak to the General.'

The sound of the closing door followed. I knew now what the *miles meant on the false faces of those women-friends of mine who*

had met me in the Park. An ordinary man, in Michael's place, would have mentioned my own encouragement of him as a sufficient excuse. *He*, with the inbred delicacy and reticence of a gentleman, had taken all the blame on himself. Indignant and ashamed, I advanced to the breakfast-room, bent on instantly justifying him. Drawing aside the curtain, I was startled by a sound as of a person sobbing. I cautiously looked in. Lady Catherine was prostrate on the sofa, hiding her face in her hands, in a passion of tears.

I withdrew, completely bewildered. The extraordinary contradictions in my aunt's conduct were not at an end yet. Later in the day, I went to my uncle, resolved to set Michael right in *his* estimation, and to leave him to speak to Lady Catherine. The General was in the lowest spirits; he shook his head ominously the moment I mentioned the groom's name. 'I dare say the man meant no harm—but the thing has been observed. I can't have you made the subject of scandal, Mina. Lady Catherine makes a point of it—Michael must go.'

'You don't mean to say that my aunt has insisted on your sending Michael away?'

Before he could answer me, a footman appeared with a message. 'My lady wishes to see you, sir.'

The General rose directly. My curiosity had got, by this time, beyond all restraint. I was actually indelicate enough to ask if I might go with him! He stared at me, as well he might. I persisted; I said I particularly wished to see Lady Catherine. My uncle's punctilious good breeding still resisted me. 'Your aunt may wish to speak to me in private,' he said. 'Wait a moment, and I will send for you.' My obstinacy was something superhuman; the bare idea that Michael might lose his place, through my fault, made me desperate, I suppose. 'I won't trouble you to send for me,' I persisted; 'I will go with you at once as far as the door, and wait to hear if I may come in.' The footman was still present, holding the door open; the General gave way. I kept so close behind him, that my aunt saw me as her husband entered the room. 'Come in, Mina,' she said, speaking and looking like the charming Lady Catherine of every-day life. Was this the woman whom I had seen crying her heart out on the sofa hardly an hour ago?

'On second thoughts,' she continued, turning to the General, 'I fear I may have been a little hasty. Pardon me for troubling you about it again—have you spoken to Michael yet? No? Then let us err on the side of kindness; let us look over his misconduct this time.'

My uncle was evidently relieved. I seized the opportunity of making my confession, and taking the whole blame on myself. Lady Catherine stopped me with the perfect grace of which she was mistress.

‘My good child, don’t distress yourself! don’t make mountains out of molehills!’ She patted me on the cheek with two plump white fingers which felt deadly cold. ‘I was not always prudent, Mina, when I was your age. Besides, your curiosity was naturally excited about a servant who is—what shall I call him?—a foundling.’

She paused and fixed her eyes on me attentively. ‘Is it a very romantic story?’ she asked.

The General began to fidget in his chair. If I had kept my attention on him, I should have seen in his face a warning to me to be silent. But my interest at the moment was absorbed in my aunt. Encouraged by her amiable reception, I was not merely unsuspecting of the trap that she had set for me—I was actually foolish enough to think that I could improve Michael’s position in her estimation (remember that I was in love with him!) by telling his story exactly as I have already told it in these pages. I spoke with fervour. Will you believe it?—her humour positively changed again! She flew into a passion with me for the first time in her life.

‘Lies!’ she cried. ‘Impudent lies on the face of them—invented to appeal to your interest. How dare you repeat them? General! if Mina had not brought it on herself, this man’s audacity would justify you in instantly dismissing him. Don’t you agree with me?’

The General’s sense of fair play roused him for once into openly opposing his wife. ‘You are completely mistaken,’ he said. ‘Mina and I have both had the shawl and the letter in our hands—and (what was there besides?)—ah, yes, the very linen the child was wrapped in.’

What there was in those words to check Lady Catherine’s anger in its full flow, I was quite unable to understand. If the General had put a pistol to her head, he could hardly have silenced her more effectually. She did not appear to be frightened, or ashamed of her outbreak of rage—she sat vacant and speechless, with her eyes on her husband and her hands crossed on her lap. After waiting a moment (wondering as I did what it meant) the General rose with his customary resignation and left her. I followed the General. He was unusually silent and thoughtful; not a word passed between us. I afterwards discovered that he was beginning to fear, poor man, that his wife’s mind must be affected in some way, and was

meditating a consultation with the physician who helped us in cases of need.

As for myself, I was either too stupid or too innocent to feel any forewarnings of the truth, so far. Before the day was over, the first vague suspicions began to find their way into my mind.

The events which I have been relating happened (it may be necessary to remind you) in the first part of the day. After luncheon, while I was alone in the conservatory, my maid came to me from Michael, asking if I had any commands for him in the afternoon. I thought this rather odd; but it occurred to me that he might want some hours to himself. I made the inquiry. To my astonishment, the maid announced that Lady Catherine had employed Michael to go on an errand for her. The nature of the errand was to take a letter to her bookseller, and to bring back the books which she had ordered. With three idle footmen in the house, whose business it was to perform such service as this, why had she taken the groom away from his work? The question obtained such complete possession of my mind—so worried me, in the ordinary phrase—that I actually summoned courage enough to go to my aunt, and ask if she saw any objection to sending one of the three indoor servants for her books in Michael's place.

She received me with a strange hard stare, and answered with obstinate self-possession, 'I wish Michael to go.' No explanation followed. If I had planned to take a drive in my pony-carriage, Michael could easily deliver her letter later in the day. With reason or without it, agreeable to me or not agreeable to me, she wished the groom to go.

As she repeated those words I felt my first suspicion of something wrong. I begged her pardon for interfering, and replied that I had not planned to drive out that day. She made no further remark. I left the room, determining to watch her. There is no defence for my conduct; it was mean and unbecoming, no doubt. I was drawn on, by some force in me which I could not even attempt to resist. Indeed, indeed I am not a mean woman by nature!

At first, I thought of speaking to Michael; not with any special motive or suspicion, but simply because I felt drawn towards him as the guide and helper in whom my heart trusted at this crisis in my life. A little consideration, however, suggested to me that I might be seen speaking to him, and might so do him an injury. While I was still hesitating, the thought came to me that Lady Catherine's motive for sending him to her bookseller's was to get him out of her way. Out of her way in the house? No: his place was not in the house. Out of her way in the stables? The next

instant the idea flashed across my mind of watching the stable doors.

The best bedrooms, my room included, were all in front of the house. I went up to my maid's room, which looked on the courtyard; ready with my excuse, if she happened to be there. She was not there. I placed myself at the window, in full view of the stables opposite.

An interval elapsed—long or short, I cannot say which; I was too much excited to look at my watch. All I know is that I discovered her! She crossed the yard, after waiting to make sure that no one was there to see her; and she entered the stables by the door that led to that part of the building occupied by Michael and by the two horses of which he had the special charge. This time I looked at my watch. Forty minutes passed before I saw her again. And then, instead of appearing at the door, she showed herself at the window of Michael's room; throwing it wide open. I concealed myself behind the window curtain, just in time to escape discovery, as she looked up at the house. She next appeared in the yard, hurrying back. I waited a while, trying to compose myself in case I met anyone on the stairs. There was little danger of a meeting at that hour. The General was at his club; the servants were at their tea. I reached my own room without being seen by anyone, and locked myself in.

What had she been doing for forty minutes in Michael's room? And why had she opened the window?

I spare you my reflections on these perplexing questions. Let me only say that, even yet, I was not experienced enough to guess at the truth. A convenient head-ache saved me from the ordeal of meeting Lady Catherine at the dinner-table. I passed a restless and miserable night; conscious that I had found my way blindly, as it were, to some terrible secret which might have its influence on my whole future life, and not knowing what to think, or what to do next. Even then, I shrank instinctively from speaking to my uncle. This was not wonderful. But I felt afraid to speak to Michael—and that perplexed and alarmed me. Consideration for Lady Catherine was certainly not the motive that kept me silent, after what I had seen.

The next morning, my pale face abundantly justified the assertion that I was still ill. My aunt, always doing her maternal duty towards me, came herself to inquire after my health before I was out of my room. So certain was she of not having been observed on the previous day—or so prodigious was her power of controlling herself—that she actually advised me to go out riding *before lunch*, and try what the fresh air and the exercise would do

to relieve me! Feeling that I must end in speaking to Michael, it struck me that this would be the one safe way of speaking to him in private. I accepted her advice, and had another approving pat on the cheek from the plump white fingers. They no longer struck cold on my skin; the customary vital warmth had returned to them. Her ladyship's mind had recovered its tranquillity.

IX.

I LEFT the house for my morning ride.

Michael was not in his customary spirits. With some difficulty, I induced him to tell me the reason. He had decided on giving notice to leave his situation in the General's employment. As soon as I could command myself, I asked what had happened to justify this incomprehensible proceeding on his part. He silently offered me a letter. It was written by the master whom he had served before he came to us; and it announced that an employment as secretary was offered to him in the house of a gentleman who was 'interested in his creditable efforts to improve his position in the world.' What it cost me to preserve the outward appearance of composure as I handed back the letter, I am ashamed to tell. I spoke to him with some bitterness. 'Your wishes are gratified,' I said; 'I don't wonder that you are eager to leave your place.' He reined back his horse, and repeated my words. 'Eager to leave my place? I am heart-broken at leaving it.' I was reckless enough to ask why. His head sank. 'I daren't tell you,' he said. I went on from one imprudence to another. 'What are you afraid of?' I asked. He suddenly looked up at me. His eyes answered: 'You.'

Can you fathom the folly of a woman in love? Can you imagine the enormous importance which the veriest trifles assume in her poor little mind? I was perfectly satisfied—even perfectly happy, after that one look. I rode on briskly for a minute or two—then the forgotten scene at the stables recurred to my memory. I resumed a foot-pace and beckoned to him to speak to me.

'Lady Catherine's bookseller lives in the City, doesn't he?' I began.

'Yes, miss.'

'Did you walk both ways?'

'Yes.'

'You must have felt tired when you got back?'

'I hardly remember what I felt when I got back—I was met by a surprise.'

'May I ask what it was?'

‘Certainly, miss. Do you remember a black bag of mine?’

‘Perfectly.’

‘When I returned from the City, I found the bag open; and the things I kept in it—the shawl, the linen, and the letter—’

‘Gone?’

‘Gone.’

My heart gave one great leap in me, and broke into vehement throbbings, which made it impossible for me to say a word more. I reined up my horse, and fixed my eyes on Michael. He was startled; he asked if I felt faint. I could only sign to him to go on.

‘My own belief,’ he proceeded, ‘is that some person burnt the things in my absence, and opened the window to prevent any suspicion being excited by the smell. I am certain I shut the window before I left my room. When I closed it on my return, the fresh air had not entirely removed the smell of burning; and, what is more, I found a heap of ashes in the grate. As to the person who has done me this injury, and why it has been done, those are mysteries beyond my fathoming.—I beg your pardon, miss, I am sure you are not well. Might I advise you to return to the house?’

I accepted his advice, and turned back.

In the tumult of horror and amazement that filled my mind, I could still feel a faint triumph stirring in me through it all, when I saw how alarmed and how anxious he was about me. Nothing more passed between us on the way back. Confronted by the dreadful discovery that I had made, I was silent and helpless. Of the guilty persons concerned in the concealment of the birth, and in the desertion of the infant, my nobly-born, highly-bred, irreproachable aunt now stood revealed before me as one! An older woman than I was might have been hard put to it to preserve her presence of mind, in such a position as mine. Instinct, not reason, served me in my sore need. Instinct, not reason, kept me passively and stupidly silent when I got back to the house. ‘We will talk about it to-morrow,’ was all I could say to Michael, when he gently lifted me from my horse.

I excused myself from appearing at the luncheon-table; and I drew down the blinds in my sitting-room, so that my face might not betray me when Lady Catherine’s maternal duty brought her upstairs to make inquiries. The same excuse served in both cases—my ride had failed to relieve me of my headache. My aunt’s brief visit led to one result which is worth mentioning. The indescribable horror of her that I felt, forced the conviction on my mind that *we two could live no longer under the same roof.* While I was

still trying to face this alternative with the needful composure, my uncle presented himself, in some anxiety about my continued illness. I should certainly have burst out crying, when the kind and dear old man kissed me and consoled with me, if he had not brought news with him which turned back all my thoughts on myself and my aunt. Michael had shown the General his letter, and had given notice to leave. Lady Catherine was present at the time. To her husband's amazement, she abruptly interfered with a personal request to Michael to think better of it, and to remain in his place!

'I should not have troubled you, my dear, on this unpleasant subject,' said my uncle, 'if Michael had not told me that you were aware of the circumstances under which he feels it his duty to leave us. After your aunt's interference (quite incomprehensible to me), the man hardly knows what to do. Being your groom, he begs me to ask if there is any impropriety in his leaving the difficulty to your decision. I tell you of his request, Mina; but I strongly advise you to decline taking any responsibility on yourself.'

I answered mechanically, accepting my uncle's suggestion, while my thoughts were wholly absorbed in this last of the many extraordinary proceedings on Lady Catherine's part since Michael had entered the house. There are limits—out of books and plays—to the innocence of a young unmarried woman. After what I had just heard, the doubts which had thus far perplexed me were suddenly and completely cleared up. I said to my secret self: 'She has some human feeling left. Michael Bloomfield is her son!'

From the moment when my mind emerged from the darkness, I recovered the use of such intelligence and courage as I naturally possessed. From this point, you will find that, right or wrong, I saw my way before me, and took it.

To say that I felt for the General with my whole heart, is merely to own that I could be commonly grateful. I sat on his knee, and laid my cheek against his cheek, and thanked him for his long, long years of kindness to me. He stopped me in his simple generous way. 'Why, Mina, you talk as if you were going to leave us!' I started up, and went to the window, opening it and complaining of the heat, and so concealing from him that he had unconsciously anticipated the event that was indeed to come. When I returned to my chair, he helped me to recover myself by alluding once more to my aunt. He feared that her health was in some way impaired. In the time when they had first met, she was subject to nervous maladies, having their origin in a 'calamity'

which was never mentioned by either of them in later days. She might possibly be suffering again, from some other form of nervous derangement, and he seriously thought of persuading her to send for medical advice.

Under ordinary circumstances, this vague reference to a 'calamity' would not have excited any special interest in me. But my mind was now in a state of morbid suspicion. I knew that my uncle and aunt had been married for twenty-four years; and I remembered Michael had described himself as being twenty-six years old. Bearing these circumstances in mind, it struck me that I might be acting wisely (in Michael's interest) if I persuaded the General to speak further of what had happened, at the time when he met the woman whom an evil destiny had bestowed on him for a wife. Nothing but the consideration of serving the man I loved would have reconciled me to making my own secret use of the recollections which my uncle might innocently confide to me. As it was, I thought the means would, in this case, be for once justified by the end. Before we part, I have little doubt that you will think so too.

I found it an easier task than I had anticipated to turn the talk back again to the days when the General had seen Lady Catherine for the first time. He was proud of the circumstances under which he had won his wife. Ah, how my heart ached for him as I saw his eyes sparkle and the colour mount in his fine rugged face!

This is the substance of what I heard from him. I tell it briefly, because it is still painful to me to tell it at all.

My uncle had met Lady Catherine at her father's country house. She had then reappeared in society, after a long period of seclusion, passed partly in England, partly on the Continent. Before the date of her retirement, she had been engaged to marry a French nobleman, equally illustrious by his birth, and by his diplomatic services in the East. Within a few weeks of the wedding-day, he was drowned by the wreck of his yacht. This was the calamity to which my uncle had referred.

Lady Catherine's mind was so seriously affected by the dreadful event, that the doctors refused to answer for the consequences, unless she was at once placed in the strictest retirement. Her mother, and a French maid devotedly attached to her, were the only persons whom it was considered safe for the young lady to see, until time and care had in some degree composed her. An after-residence in a quiet Swiss valley slowly completed the restoration of her health. Her return to her friends and admirers was

naturally a subject of sincere rejoicing among the guests assembled in her father's house. My uncle's interest in Lady Catherine soon developed into love. They were equals in rank, and well suited to each other in age. The parents raised no obstacles; but they did not conceal from their guest that the disaster which had befallen their daughter was but too likely to disincline her to receive his addresses, or any man's addresses, favourably. To their surprise, they proved to be wrong. The young lady was touched by the simplicity and the delicacy with which her lover urged his suit. She had lived among worldly people. This was a man whose devotion she could believe to be sincere. They were married.

Had no unusual circumstances occurred? Had nothing happened which the General had forgotten? Nothing.

X.

It is surely needless that I should stop here, to draw the plain inferences from the events just related. Any person who remembers that the shawl in which the infant was wrapped came from those Eastern regions which were associated with the French nobleman's diplomatic services—also, that the faults of composition in the letter found on the child were exactly the faults likely to have been committed by the French maid—any person who follows these traces can find his way to the truth as I found mine.

Returning for a moment to the hopes which I had formed of being of some service to Michael, I have only to say that they were at once destroyed, when I heard of the death by drowning of the man to whom the evidence pointed as his father. The prospect looked equally barren when I thought of the miserable mother. That she should openly acknowledge her son in her position, was perhaps not to be expected of any woman. Had she courage enough, or, in plainer words, heart enough to acknowledge him privately?

I called to mind again some of the apparent caprices and contradictions in Lady Catherine's conduct, on the memorable day when Michael had presented himself to fill the vacant place. Look back with me to the record of what she said and did on that occasion, by the light of your present knowledge, and you will see that his likeness to his father must have struck her when he entered the room, and that his statement of his age must have correctly described the age of her son. Recall the actions that followed—the withdrawal to the window to conceal her face; the clutch at the curtain when she felt herself sinking; the cry, not

of terror at a cat, but of recognition of the father's nervous infirmity reappearing in the son; the harshness of manner under which she concealed her emotions when she ventured to speak to him; the reiterated inconsistencies and vacillations of conduct that followed, all alike due to the protest of Nature, desperately resisted to the last—and say if I did her injustice when I believed her to be incapable of running the smallest risk of discovery at the prompting of maternal love.

There remained, then, only Michael to think of. I remembered how he had spoken of the unnatural parents whom he neither expected nor cared to discover. Still, I could not reconcile it to my conscience to accept a chance outbreak of temper as my sufficient justification for keeping him in ignorance of a discovery which so nearly concerned him. It seemed at least to be my duty to make myself acquainted with the true state of his feelings, before I decided to bear the burden of silence with me to my grave.

What I felt it my duty to do in this serious matter, I determined to do at once. Besides, let me honestly own that I felt lonely and desolate, oppressed by the critical situation in which I was placed, and eager for the relief that it would be to me only to hear the sound of Michael's voice. I sent my maid to say that I wished to speak to him immediately. The crisis was already hanging over my head. That one act brought it down.

XI.

He came in, and stood modestly waiting at the door.

After making him take a chair, I began by saying that I had received his message, and that, acting on my uncle's advice, I must abstain from interfering in the question of his leaving, or not leaving, his place. Having in this way established a reason for sending for him, I alluded next to the loss that he had sustained, and asked if he had any prospect of finding out the person who had entered his room in his absence. On his reply in the negative, I spoke of the serious results to him of the act of destruction that had been committed. 'Your last chance of discovering your parents,' I said, 'has been cruelly destroyed.'

He smiled sadly. 'You know already, miss, that I never expected to discover them.'

I ventured a little nearer to the object I had in view.

'Do you never think of your mother?' I asked. 'At your age,

she might be still living. Can you give up all hope of finding her, without feeling your heart ache?’

‘If I have done her wrong, in believing that she deserted me,’ he answered, ‘the heart-ache is but a poor way of expressing the remorse that I should feel.’

I ventured nearer still. ‘Even if you were right,’ I began—‘even if she did desert you——’

He interrupted me sternly. ‘I would not cross the street to see her,’ he said. ‘A woman who deserts her child is a monster. Forgive me for speaking so, miss! When I see good mothers and their children, it maddens me when I think of what *my* childhood was.’

Hearing those words, and watching him attentively while he spoke, I could see that my silence would be a mercy, not a crime. I hastened to speak of other things. ‘If you decide to leave us,’ I said, ‘when shall you go?’

His eyes softened instantly. Little by little the colour faded out of his face as he answered me.

‘The General kindly said, when I spoke of leaving my place——’ His voice faltered, and he paused to steady it. ‘My master,’ he resumed, ‘said that I need not keep my new employer waiting by staying for the customary month, provided—provided you were willing to dispense with my services.’

So far, I had succeeded in controlling myself. At that reply, I felt my resolution failing me. I saw how he suffered; I saw how manfully he struggled to conceal it. All my heart went out to him, in spite of me.

‘I am not willing,’ I said. ‘I am sorry—very, very sorry to lose you. But I will do anything that is for your good. I can say no more.’

He rose suddenly, as if to leave the room; mastered himself; stood for a moment silently looking at me—then looked away again, and said his parting words.

‘If I succeed, Miss Mina, in my new employment—if I get on perhaps to higher things—is it—is it presuming too much, to ask if I might, some day—perhaps when you are out riding alone—if I might speak to you—only to ask if you are well and happy——’

He could say no more. I saw the tears in his eyes; saw him shaken by the convulsive breathings which break from men in the rare moments when they cry. He forced it back even then. He bowed to me—oh, God, he bowed to me, as if he were only my *servant*! as if he were too far below me to take my hand, even at *that moment*! I could have endured anything else; I believe I could still have restrained myself under any other circumstances.

It matters little now ; my confession must be made, whatever you may think of me. I flew to him like a frenzied creature—I threw my arms round his neck—I said to him, ‘Oh, Michael, don’t you know that I love you?’ And then I laid my head on his breast, and held him to me, and said no more.

In that moment of silence, the door of the room was opened. I started, and looked up. Lady Catherine was standing on the threshold.

I saw in her face that she had been listening—she must have followed him when he was on his way to my room. That conviction steadied me. I took his hand in mine, and stood side by side with him, waiting for her to speak first. She looked at Michael, not at me. She advanced a step or two, and addressed him in these words: ‘It is just possible that *you* have some sense of decency left. Leave the room.’

That deliberate insult was all I wanted to make me completely mistress of myself. I told Michael to wait a moment, and opened my writing-desk. I wrote on an envelope the address in London of a faithful old servant who had attended my mother in her last moments. I gave it to Michael. ‘Call there to-morrow morning,’ I said. ‘You will find me waiting for you.’

He looked at Lady Catherine, evidently unwilling to leave me alone with her. ‘Fear nothing,’ I said; ‘I am old enough to take care of myself. I have only a word to say to this lady before I leave the house.’ With that, I took his arm, and walked with him to the door, and said good-bye almost as composedly as if we had been husband and wife already.

Lady Catherine’s eyes followed me as I shut the door again, and crossed the room to a second door which led into my bed-chamber. She suddenly stepped up to me, just as I was entering the room, and laid her hand on my arm.

‘What do I see in your face?’ she asked, as much of herself as of me—with her eyes fixed in keen inquiry on mine.

‘You shall know directly,’ I answered. ‘Let me get my bonnet and cloak first.’

‘Do you mean to leave the house?’

‘I do.’

She rang the bell. I quietly dressed myself, to go out.—The servant answered the bell, as I returned to the sitting-room.

‘Tell your master I wish to see him instantly,’ said Lady Catherine.

‘My master has gone out, my lady.’

‘To his club?’

‘*I believe so, my lady.*’

‘I will send you with a letter to him. Come back when I ring again.’ She turned to me as the man withdrew. ‘Do you refuse to stay here until the General returns?’

‘I shall be happy to see the General, if you will enclose my address in your letter to him.’

Replying in those terms, I wrote the address for the second time. Lady Catherine knew perfectly well, when I gave it to her, that I was going to a respectable house kept by a woman who had nursed me when I was a child.

‘One last question,’ she said. ‘Am I to tell the General that it is your intention to marry your groom?’

Her tone stung me into making an answer which I regretted the moment it had passed my lips.

‘You can put it more plainly, if you like,’ I said. ‘You can tell the General that it is my intention to marry *your son*.’

She was near the door, on the point of leaving me. As I spoke, she turned with a ghastly stare of horror—felt about her with her hands as if she was groping in darkness—and dropped senseless on the floor.

I instantly summoned help. The women-servants carried her to my bed. While they were restoring her to herself, I wrote a few lines telling the miserable woman how I had discovered her secret.

‘Your husband’s tranquillity,’ I added, ‘is as precious to me as my own. As for your son, you know what he thinks of the parents who deserted him. Your secret is safe in my keeping—safe from your husband, safe from your son, to the end of my life.’

I sealed up those words, and gave them to her with my own hand when she had come to herself again. I never heard from her in reply. I have never seen her from that time to this. She knows she can trust me.

And what did my good uncle say, when we next met? I would rather report what he did, when he had got the better of his first feelings of anger and surprise on hearing of my contemplated marriage. He kissed me on my wedding-day; and he gave my husband the appointment which places us both in an independent position for life.

This is my shocking story, Madam. This is how I disgraced myself by marrying my groom.

The Baby.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'PHYLLIS.'

SHE was the bonniest, sweetest, most lovable child in the world; quick, and lithe, and fairy-like. In many small points she differed from other children of her age; she seldom misplaced her words, and held all infantine abbreviations of dissyllables in contempt. From her lips, every now and then, dropped little rounded pearls of speech that made those wonder who heard: while she had a fine love of getting at the root of all matters, that raised within her people mingled feelings of admiration and awe.

At times they vaguely doubted whether she were not in reality ninety instead of barely four years old. But her clinging arms, and dewy kisses, and sweet innocence assured them of her youth. They adored her, as was only natural coming as she did thirteen years after they had all decided Nina was to be the last:—bringing with her so much grief and trouble; for as she came the mother went, and so it happened that the wee delicate bairn was flung upon a cold world, with only four growing girls to tend her, and sympathise with her joys and woes.

Their father, always a recluse, grew daily more and more taciturn and sedentary, as month by month rolling by only made him miss more hopelessly the companionship of her who had been to him all in all. Only 'the Baby' could bring a smile to his lips. Only her soft fingers could by their touch coax back the old peaceful look to his face.

But that her nature was too true for spoiling, she would have been utterly and irretrievably ruined before her first year had ended. None of those about her dared oppose her slightest wish, so that she tyrannised over the entire household, from the ancient and cross-grained butler down to the latest stable-boy, unrebuked.

But Lillas, pretty, stately Lillas, was her chief joy: gentle Lillas, with her crown of golden hair, her dark deep eyes, her lissome, graceful figure. None of them came so close to the Baby's heart as this her eldest sister; and all her tiny ripples of discontent, and still wilder waves of wrath, were ever quelled by the low sweet voice of Lillas, that rang like silver chimes.

Their name was Heriot, and they lived near a tiny village, insignificant and unknown. Three miles from them was a town

rejoicing in a railway station and (what its proprietor was pleased to name) a railway hotel. This latter was usually in a state of stagnation, but one evening in midsummer two young men, apparently fagged, brokenhearted, not to say ill-tempered, took pity on it, and leaving the station just opposite, walked into its best parlour, and sank into its horsehair chairs.

'Any use in ringing the bells?' asked the elder of the two, whose name was Lord Farnie, casting a helpless glance around.

'Try,' replied his companion sulkily, who was evidently further gone in the blues than his friend.

Lord Farnie tried. A cracked bell tinkled in the distance. There was a long pause.

Outside a few geese cackled unpleasantly; inside all was as silent as the palace that held the sleeping beauty. The sun, as yet untired, poured its golden rays through the many-paned window; the door opened slowly, sleepily, and a waiter appeared.

'Waiter,' said his lordship languidly, 'what can we have?' while his friend standing at the window gazed moodily down upon the courtyard beneath.

'Fowl, sir, cold jint, cutlets,' replied the waiter in a sing-song tone, wisping some imaginary dust off the nearest chair.

'Cutlets,' said his lordship plaintively, his eyes fixed upon a faded cobweb that hung with much dejection from the ceiling; 'cutlets in a village inn. Fred, do you think cutlets would be safe?'

'Don't know, I'm sure,' said Fred disgustedly. 'It would more than half depend on the state of the fire; perhaps they have no fire; on the whole, I should say not.'

'Then we have no resource but to fall back upon the fowl or the cold jint,' said his cousin, 'and I don't think I like cold jint. Waiter,' as though suddenly inspired, 'do you believe the presiding genius in your kitchen could cook a rasher? and fry with it two fresh eggs?'

'Oh, make it four when you are about it,' said Fred impatiently; 'I dare say I'm as hungry as you are.'

'Very good then, waiter, we will make it four, and as many rashers as her frying-pan can conveniently hold. You think she knows how to serve it properly?'

'I really can't say, sir,' said the indignant waiter, throwing as impertinent an intonation into his voice as he dared; 'we ain't in the habit of rashers in this house except at breakfast. But if she *can* throw her mind into 'em at this hour, I dessay you'll get 'em.'

'I like that fellow,' said Lord Farnie when the man had disappeared; 'there was an insolent twinkle in his eye that I specially

admired. Yet I don't think he likes me. Odd that one possessed of——'

'There, don't moralise,' said Fred brusquely, 'but tell me what induced you to stop at this beastly hole.'

'An inward craving——'

'Nonsense! when we were within five miles of our destination——!'

'My dear fellow, don't lose your temper because you have chosen to come down here,' said his cousin cheerfully, changing his glass from his right eye to his left. 'I wish myself safely out of it quite as much as you do, but I never lose my temper. Firstly, because I haven't got one to lose, and secondly, because it is bad form. I own I think Ashburnham far preferable to Linwood, but what will you? Here we are, and here we must remain at all events for a few days.'

'I hate compulsory visiting.'

'So do I. But when a man has been civil to one in a hundred little ways, and then makes a point of getting one to promise to spend some time with him, it don't do to refuse. That's about it, I take it. So let us put a good face on the matter, and be festive under adversity.'

'You're right,' said Fred, laughing; 'but old Conroy don't catch me accepting any more of his little civilities in a hurry, if this is to be the price of so doing. I have a morbid horror of small towns and eccentric gentlemen. I suppose Linwood is a worn-down place, without the common necessities of life. I shan't stay there three days.'

'Perhaps it is a Palace,' said Lord Farnie. 'At all events, we may as well go and see it now, or we shall be late for dinner and turn your "eccentric gentleman" into a ravening beast.'

They rose and went.

The next morning awoke calm and smiling; and deepening into full-grown day, showed itself one of summer's brightest and gayest efforts.

On her own doorstep stood Lillas Heriot ready equipped for a walk; she called to the Baby to hurry, and presently the little one broke from her nurse's grasp and ran to her with hand outstretched. Together the big and little sister went up the avenue under the limes, and out of sight.

Their walk for a short while was peaceful, and full of such intellectual converse as can be derived from 'Mother Hubbard' and 'Puss in Boots.' But when they entered old Tom Conroy's wood—now glowing and swelling with the pride of its rich and

bursting charms—they turned aside and took a higher flight into the land of fantasy, and discussed such topics congenial to the scene as ‘Goldenlocks,’ and poor ‘Red Ridinghood.’ Presently the Baby, tiring of bloody jaws and fiery, wicked eyes, raised her head on high, and became enamoured of some white blossoms in the tree above her. They were sufficiently beyond reach to make them madly desirable.

‘I want *them*,’ she said, with a healthy disregard of grammar.

‘But they are so far away from us that I fear we must do without them.’

‘I won’t,’ said the Baby; ‘I want them, Lily—get them for me.’

‘But, darling,’ expostulated Lily, who always would follow out an argument with children, instead of telling them, as wiser people do, to be silent, or that ‘little folks should be seen and not heard’—‘But, darling, it is impossible; and remember what happened to Goldenlocks when she went wishing for what was not meant for her. See, these yellow flowers here are far prettier.’

‘I don’t care for them, and I don’t care for Goldenlocks either,’ pouted the Baby. ‘Those up there are better—I want those—if Jerry was here,’ reproachfully, ‘she would get them for me.’ Geraldine was her second sister.

‘But Geraldine is so much taller than I am, and even *she* could not reach them without climbing.’

‘Then climb,’ said the Household Tyrant promptly.

As, when she uttered this terrible command, the big tears stood in her azure eyes, Lilius gave in; placing one foot upon a projecting branch, she essayed to climb, and just as she did so a young man, forcing his way through some laurel shrubs hard by, came—himself unseen—upon this charming picture:

A little maiden standing with frock outheld to catch the hoped-for blossoms, a bigger maiden, with intent look, showing amidst green leaves.

When Lilius had raised herself two yards from mother earth, she stopped short, and glanced down ruefully at her own miniature beneath.

‘Now, Daisy, what is to be done?’ she said; ‘I have caught my foot in some awkward way, and am as far from your flowers as ever. How shall I get down?’

Here the young man came a few steps nearer, and stood hat in hand, hesitating, hardly knowing how to proffer aid. Daisy saw him first.

‘Oh, *he* will get them for me!’ she cried gleefully—with all the



A LITTLE MAIDEN STANDING WITH FROCK UPHELD.

selfishness of childhood, forgetful of the wounded foot. 'He is taller than Jerry.'

'I shall be very happy to do anything,' said the young man, taking courage, and speaking to Daisy, while his eyes were fixed upon a crimson face a little way above him. 'Are these the flowers you want?'

He made a spring, brought them branch and all to the ground, and laid them in the tiny maiden's arms. Then he turned to Liliás.

'Now may I assist you?' he said, with a half smile.

'Thank you,' said Liliás, smiling too, but gravely, as became her position. 'That child induced me to place myself in this predicament; and my foot,' trying to stir it, and making a faint grimace, 'my foot has forced itself into this hollow—and—ah!—'

'You are hurt. I am sure you are hurt,' said the young man anxiously—'place your hand on my shoulder, and try to turn it. There! now it is released. Is it painful? Do not use it for a moment, but let me help you down.' Then very softly: 'Do you permit me?'

He attempted to put his arm round her; and as Liliás just then was making a trial of the wounded member, she uttered no protest. He took her in his arms, and placed her lightly on the ground.

'Does it pain you?' he asked.

'No—not much—it will be nothing,' said Liliás, colouring again. To her, if not to him, the situation was altogether new and strange. 'I hardly feel it now, thank you so much.' She bowed somewhat distantly, and would have gone away, but the child Daisy ran to him and caught his hand. 'Good-bye,' she said, and, while still having a tight hold of him, went on with what had been puzzling her for some minutes.

'Why did you put your arm round my Lily?' she asked.

'To help me out of the tree,' interposed Liliás, troubled, but outwardly calm. She felt what was coming.

'Oh,' said this terrible infant, pausing. Then questioningly, 'When Bob puts his arm round you, he always kisses you—but *he* didn't kiss you,' with a reproachful glance at the stranger: '*why?*' (Bob was a distant cousin.) It was too much. Sir Frederic Ashurst burst out laughing; not only laughed but roared, and in a minute or two, when she had had time to recover the shock, Liliás laughed too.

'I beg your pardon,' he said presently, with much contrition; '*I know I should not feel amused, but I cannot help it. You*

must forgive me. Good-bye, little Daisy, I am glad I was able to get you your flowers. Good-bye.'

Just then his cousin appeared, sauntering leisurely towards them.

'There you are, Fred!' he said; 'I have been looking for you everywhere.' Then he stopped and glanced curiously at Liliás, and put his hand in a puzzled way to his hat.

'I have had an adventure, Farnie; I have been happy enough to do good service to a little wood-nymph,' said Sir Frederic, smiling at Daisy; then he turned to Liliás and said frankly: 'I have no card about me, but I should like to introduce myself; I am Frederic Ashurst, and this is my cousin, Lord Farnie, and we are staying at old Tom Conroy's; and—you are Miss Heriot, I fancy.'

'Yes—I am one of the Miss Heriots,' said Liliás, smiling as frankly.

'And we live in the big grey house down there,' broke in the hospitable Baby in her high sweet treble: 'Won't you come to see us? and bring me more of those pretty white flowers—and I will show you my squirrel, and my bow-wow, and my dolly.'

'If I may,' returned Ashurst, directing appealing eyes at Liliás, 'I should like to call this afternoon to inquire about'—with a desperate guess at the relationship—'your aunt's foot.'

'It is quite well,' said Liliás coldly; then, seeing his face fall, her conscience smote her, and she added, 'But if you do call, I am sure—Papa—will be glad to see you.'

She bowed first to Lord Farnie, and then to him, bestowing a gracious smile upon the former, while not deigning to raise her eyes to the latter, and drew the child away.

'Good-bye,' called the Baby, nodding at them over her shoulder. 'Come soon. And she is not my aunt at all—she is my mammy.' So it ever pleased her to designate her sister Liliás.

That afternoon they called, and then the next day, and then the day after that again; and I think it was the day after that again, that it first dawned upon the Heriots that Sir Frederic Ashurst was in love with their Liliás.

It also dawned upon Lord Farnie. So that when a full week had gone by since their arrival at Tom Conroy's, and still his cousin showed no desire for departure, in spite of his vehement protestations on the subject before coming, he made his way one night to Fred Ashurst's room and spoke as follows:—

'I can stand it no longer,' he said; 'I am off to-morrow; it is insufferable. Nothing shall induce me to come here again. To

night he told me all over again that story about Sympkin's oxen. I wish Sympkin was dead, and his oxen too; I shall go. Will you come with me, Fred?'

'It might look rude our both going together, don't you think?' said Ashurst evasively. 'Better for me to stay a day or two longer.'

'Ah, just so,' said Farnie with a smile; 'what a considerate fellow you are, Fred! and what uncommon pretty girls those Heriots are!'

'Very—though I don't quite see what that has to do with it.'

'No more do I, but I think I like the eldest one best. She is in very truth a lily. I wonder' (provokingly) 'how you can prefer Miss Geraldine!—though I own she too might rout many a London belle. If I stayed here much longer I should lose my head—as it is—— Did you ever see anything so fresh and sweet as her smile when she gave me that rosebud yesterday? It has haunted me ever since.'

'Of whom are you speaking—of Miss Heriot?'

'Yes, of Lilius. She gave it—the rosebud, I mean—with such perfect grace.'

'I dare say you asked her for it.'

'I did certainly, nay, I begged for it, and—got it. She has the prettiest eyes I ever saw, somewhat like a cow's when chewing the cud.'

'I would not be coarse if I were you,' said Fred coldly.

'Coarse! my dear fellow, far be it from me. Can there be anything more peacefully pensive than the expression of a cow when chewing the cud of sweet and bitter meadows? The study of Nature, I doubt, has had no charms for you, else you would understand and appreciate my simile. I beg pardon if I have offended her, or you: I had no idea it had gone so far. What will the mother say? How shall you explain to Diana?'

'I don't follow you'—stiffly—'I know of nothing that requires explanation. And even if I did, I know no reason why I should choose Diana as my Mother Confessor.'

'I thought you were engaged to her,' said Farnie, flicking a small fragment of cigar ash with great care from his coat-sleeve.

'Engaged! nonsense! Of course I am not engaged to her. I believe my mother and hers have often spoken of a marriage between us as a thing that ought to be, considering how the estates lie, but I have never uttered a word of love to her in my life, and never shall, for various reasons—one of the chiefest being, that were I to do so she would not listen to me.'

‘Ah! that being so, I wish you luck with Miss Liliás,’ said his lordship, rising. ‘Good-night, dear boy; it is just as well I am leaving to-morrow, as I was fast losing my heart to the *beaux yeux* of your love.’

He left the room hastily, without waiting for a rejoinder, but on the corridor outside he paused, and his whole expression changed and softened.

‘So!’ he said, ‘I am glad to know that of Diana. I shall chance it with her, on my return from the North. She is handsome, *distinguée*, and can hold her own. She likes me, I fancy, and—ah!—really I do believe I like her too—uncommonly!’

So he left; but Sir Frederic lingered on at Linwood, until time had grown into a month.

It was night; but night as light as day: so pale and brilliant were the moonbeams, so faint and shadowy was the veil that lay upon the land.

Liliás stood in her rose-scented garden alone; her hands clasped loosely behind her, her eyes fixed upon the tiny stream that gurgled at her feet.

She had plucked her rose, and now watched it floating away from her leaf by leaf upon the water’s bosom, leaving behind it an assurance sweet as the touch of lips forbidden.

‘He loves me,’ she whispered dreamily, her fingers still pressing the last kind petal. ‘He loves me,’ she repeated with a long-drawn happy sigh.

‘He does, he does,’ murmured a voice close beside her in trembling accents. ‘Oh Liliás! but do you love him?’

For all answer she turned and laid her soft pink-flushed cheek to his.

It was a wonderful thing to the Heriots, to hear that Liliás was going to be married—and to Sir Frederic Ashurst. She would have a title—she would be My Lady Ashurst—it was as good as Cinderella.

Their father was pleased, but puzzled. For the first time, as he saw one of them preparing to leave the home-nest, it dawned upon him that they were no longer children. He approved of the engagement, but shrank from naming any immediate day for the wedding.

‘Time, time,’ he said to Frederic, ‘give me time. You rob me of a dear possession, and expect me to rejoice over it. You are going to Scotland for the grouse-shooting: well, when you return we will talk over it.’

‘Then I shall return immediately,’ said Fred, laughing ; but so it was arranged ; and after a few more days of lovers’ raptures, Liliás and he bade each other a sad farewell, ‘and kissed, and kissed,’ and parted.

Four weeks alone were to separate them ; but when he had been gone barely a fortnight, it so happened that one day a carriage drove up to the Heriots’ door, and from it alighted an elderly lady, short but resplendent, whose features—as Lily gazed upon them from an upper casement—did not seem to her altogether unfamiliar.

She begged a private audience of Mr. Heriot, and being shown into the library, where he sat reading, made him a present—according to his daughters’ calculations—of one hour of her society.

By the time the school-room clock chimed two, all four girls were nearly mad with a suppressed desire to know ; and when the stranger had departed, and Liliás of them all was summoned to the mysterious apartment she had so lately occupied, their excitement knew no bounds.

Half-an-hour more dragged slowly by, and then Liliás came slowly with uncertain steps into the hall, where they stood awaiting her. Her face was as death, her very figure had lost some of its pretty roundness.

‘Liliás,’ they cried, catching hold of her, ‘Liliás ! what is it ?’

‘Nothing,’ she said in a low voice, twisting her slender fingers in and out, with a fierce effort at composure. ‘Nothing—only—he is engaged—he was engaged all the time—to his cousin, Diana Fairfax.’

She went from them up the stairs with swift steps, whilst they—stupid with rage and grief—stood below and mutely watched her.

Presently they knew it all. The lady who had been closeted with their father was Lady Ashurst, Frederic’s mother, and she had come to tell him of her son’s engagement to his cousin Diana Fairfax. They had been betrothed for years, she said, with the consent of both families. She had heard accidentally of his imprudent conduct with Miss Heriot, and had hastened to inform Mr. Heriot, for the good of all parties, of how matters really stood.

Her son’s honour was in his hands : would he not restore it to him unbroken ? Was this sudden fancy for Liliás to lower him for ever in the eyes of his world ?

She was an adroit old lady. Of course, as she put it, she showed if possible more consideration for Liliás than for her son. Mr. Heriot, cold and calm, gave her an assurance that, as far as he and his were concerned, her son should be regarded as though he had *never been amongst them.*

‘But as for his honour’—he paused, and then went on—‘it is not in my keeping; and—I know not where it is.’

It was the only unkind insinuation he allowed himself.

Her ladyship, well content, withdrew.

‘And now,’ said Mr. Heriot severely that same evening, ‘let me never again hear that young man’s name mentioned in this house. He is dead to us. Let us all remember that.’

He did not look at Liliás, who sat quiet within the embrasure of the window, her knitting in her hands, her fingers moving swiftly, her eyes bent down.

‘Should anyone,’ went on her father sternly, ‘receive a letter from him, I desire it shall be returned to its false sender, without an answer, and unopened.’

He paused. They all sat round silent, frightened. Liliás alone was calm. She looked up bravely.

‘You shall be obeyed, papa,’ she said without a tremor in her voice, and left the room.

A shadow fell upon them. Nina and Gertrude were crying silently. A heavy sigh broke from their father. These were the only sounds that came to them through the gloom. Was the father thinking of her who should have been there now to soothe and comfort her stricken child?

‘Papa,’ murmured a little troubled voice from out of the semi-darkness, ‘papa!’

Five small fingers tightened upon his; he lifted the child in his arms, and as he pressed her almost passionately to his breast, two large tears fell upon her upturned face.

After this a good deal of the laughter of their lives went from them. Not that they were altogether unhappy; but they had an uneasy feeling that at any time something further might crop up, as a sequel to poor Lily’s story. Still, they took whatever amusement chance threw in their way, and to the outer world were as they had ever been.

Liliás herself appeared utterly callous and unconcerned. At times, so perfect was her indifference, that a vague feeling of disappointment oppressed the others, as they asked themselves whether indeed the love that had seemed so real could be put aside and forgotten as entirely as though it had never existed. But in this they wronged her.

About a fortnight after the preceding events, and just about the time when, if all had gone well, Fred might have been expected home, someone in their neighbourhood gave a ball. The Heriots went to it, and Liliás throughout the evening was almost

feverishly gay. With pained astonishment, her sisters watched her. All through the drive home she chattered, and laughed, and jested with them, and with their chaperon. But when at length the journey's end was reached, and the friendly bedroom door was closed against intruders, she flung herself upon the floor with a low, agonised groan.

'I cannot bear it any longer,' she said to Geraldine—(they occupied the same room)—'it is killing me; will it never end? Oh! to sleep, only to wake to it again, that is the horror of it.'

'Lilias!' cried Jerry, bending in dismay over the slight white heap upon the ground. 'Darling, this is dreadful. Surely you are not still thinking of——'

'Yes, I am,' she said doggedly; 'I am always thinking of him—I never cease thinking of him—I wish I was dead. Oh! if I could only see him again, only once, perhaps I might bear it better. But to have no good-bye, no last word—and the pain in my heart for ever burning—burning——'

'Lily—Lily,' called a plaintive voice from the dressing-room, in frightened sleepy tones, 'Lily!'

It was the Baby awakening from a dream of bogies, and calling to her favourite mother to come to her aid. How could she refuse the entreating accents? She rose wearily but hastily, and, going to the small crib, took the child to her breast, and holding it so, and crooning over it and soothing it, soothed too at the same time her own poor wounded heart.

The next morning Mr. Heriot received a letter the writing on the envelope of which turned pale Lilias paler still. It was from Fred, and declared his intention of coming forthwith to her home to learn in person the cause of the strange silence to which he had been subjected.

A little thrill of excitement ran through the household. Lilias's lips refused to speak,—she sat silently awaiting her doom. And when her father came in and said she was to go to her grandmother's for a month or two, she acquiesced quietly and made no protest.

To go to her grandmother's was like going to execution, because she was a dreadful old woman, and was vehemently detested by everyone of the girls. She had a hateful habit of always calling a spade a spade, and would not hesitate about playing upon one's weak point.

However, Lilias gave in without a murmur, and packed her things in a methodical, miserable sort of way that nearly broke Geraldine's heart; and when Daisy had squeezed a beloved but dilapidated doll, and half a gingerbread cake damp with tears, into

her pocket, she stepped into the carriage and drove away to the railway station.

‘I give strict orders,’ said Mr. Heriot, to the three who remained behind—taking no heed of Daisy, who sat shrivelled up in a corner ‘like Niobe, all tears’—‘I give strict orders that if that young man—Sir Frederic Ashurst—calls, none of you give him any information about Lilius’s present abode.’

She had only been gone two days, when, as Geraldine sat moodily working in the drawing-room, she chanced to raise her head, and there outside the lower window stood Frederic Ashurst.

He lifted the sash, and vaulted lightly in.

‘Well, here I am again,’ he said defiantly, before she could speak. ‘And what is all this that has happened during my absence? An engagement spoken of that was never an engagement—the whole world dead against me—and Lilius hidden away! What is the meaning of it?’

‘You have behaved shamefully,’ cried she with rage, ‘hatefully, and I wonder you dare show your face here again. No engagement, indeed! when your own mother came to this house and spoke to papa about it, and was as rude as ever she could be, and——’

‘It was not an engagement,’ he persisted angrily. ‘There was Diana, and there was I, and because our estates joined, two or three old women put their heads together, and decided we should marry each other, whether we liked it or not. She is four years older than I am; we grew up together; I would as soon dream of marrying my sister, and she would not have me if I asked her.’

‘Your mother said you were engaged to her,’ replied she obstinately, running the point of her needle across the linen she was working, so as to make a creaking, aggravating noise, ‘and I, for my part, believe her.’

‘She—made herself misunderstood.’ Then, hotly—‘Am I a blackguard to come here, and try to win your sister’s affection, when promised to another woman? My mother has wished so earnestly and so long to see me married to my cousin, that she has brought herself to imagine her wish fulfilled. It was all a mistake—a fatal one. And then my letters,’ he said with agitation, ‘rejected unanswered; and I alone left in the dark as to the real cause. It was unjust. And now, when I have come down here without an instant’s delay to explain to her, I find — you will tell me where she is, Geraldine?’

‘No; indeed I will not. Even if I would, I could not, as I have promised papa faithfully not to do so.’

'It is madness. Such promises are better broken than kept.'

'Oh! We all know how lightly *you* regard your promises,' muttered she viciously.

'What has come to you, Jerry?' asked Fred, his tone changing. 'You used to be the best little girl in the world, and now you treat me as though I were the veriest scoundrel the world contains. What have I done to you?'

'What have you done?' cried she, tears in her eyes and voice. 'What have you not done? You have upset our whole lives. You have made Liliās—the dearest, sweetest darling upon earth—miserable; you have driven her from her home; you have destroyed our peace, and now you ask what you have done. I wish,' exclaimed she, waxing wroth, 'I had never heard your voice—I wish I had never seen you. I hate and detest you with all my heart—so, there!'

'Thank you,' said Fred stiffly. 'I have not taken away your breath, at all events. Do you refuse to tell me where she is?'

'I do, distinctly.'

'Very good, then I shall find out for myself; it is only a question of time.'

A patter of tiny footsteps—a ringing, joyous laugh. The door was flung widely open, and the Baby came in.

'Ah, Freddy, Freddy!' cried she rapturously, and spreading out her arms, she came flying up to him, her exquisite golden fleece floating behind. 'You have come back: I knew you would; and now my Lily will come too. How glad she will be! I know she hates staying with grandmamma.'

'Daisy,' Jerry broke in vehemently, 'do not speak of Liliās. I forbid you to mention her.'

But he had her in his arms, and was gazing at her, compelling her by the very fixedness of his look to answer him.

'Go on,' he said with authority. 'She is staying with grandmamma—*where?*'

'Yes, at Marley, in Surrey,' said the child in a troubled tone, glancing first at him and then at Jerry. 'Marley Hall—did you not know? Have you not been to see her? She always said you would come to see her the very first thing when you came back. But that was before she left.'

'So I will,' cried Fred ecstatically, straining the child to his breast. 'The very first thing, indeed. Oh Daisy! Daisy! what a debt I owe you! My poor Liliās, she at least believes no evil of me.'

'Daisy, what have you done?' exclaimed Jerry desperately; and then to him: 'If you take advantage of what that child said, *you will be—*'

‘Take advantage of it!’ repeated Fred, with his old gay laugh. ‘That I will, and before the sun goes down. Good-bye, Jerry; try to think more kindly of me. It is unpleasant to be on bad terms with one’s brother-in-law. What shall I bring you from London, Daisy?—a doll?—a very big doll?’

‘Oh, will you?’ cried the Baby, clapping her hands. ‘And will it open and shut its eyes? Cecilia,’ in a half-whisper, ‘has one that nods, and says “Mamma.”’

‘You shall have one that says “Mamma” and “Papa” too,’ said Fred decidedly. ‘Good-bye, my best friend,’ kissing her. ‘You shall have your doll.’

‘And Lily too?’ called the child.

‘And Lily too,’ returned he gaily.

In the drawing-room at Marley there was consternation. An ominous yellow envelope lying upon the ground had brought them news that raised within them feelings of indignation and fear. In one poor heart it had raised hope. George Heriot had sent his mother warning of the approach of his daughter’s false lover.

Lilias sat apart: Lilias, with flushed cheeks and bent brows, and small feverish hands, tightly interlaced, lying upon her lap. No one heeded her—except, perhaps, uncle Charles.

Old Mrs. Heriot sat in judgment. Her mittened fingers had in them a world of determination. She was in her most awful mood, and chose the centre ottoman as her throne. With the first finger of her right hand she proceeded to lay down the law.

‘It is indecent,’ she said, ‘neither more nor less, to persecute us in this way. In my young days, no gentleman with any claims to distinction would have so forgotten himself. But the youth of the present day are sadly wanting. What does he mean by this intrusion?’

‘Well, perhaps it is only natural his wishing to come here, under the circumstances,’ said uncle Charles from the background, with a glance at Lilias: he and his elder brother being both present.

‘Natural!’ frowned uncle John. ‘When a man is openly engaged to one woman, what right has he to go philandering after another? Answer me that. If he has the impertinence to show himself here in this house, after his dishonourable conduct, I shall——’

‘I don’t believe it was very much of an engagement,’ said Charles. ‘There was something about another man——’

‘Charles!’ interrupted his mother severely. ‘Cease any ex-

cuses. The young man has behaved abominably. No more need be said on that subject.'

'I certainly did hear she was going to marry that Lord,' said Charles unrebuked.

There was an awkward pause, but Lillas neither raised her head, nor seemed to hear.

'Just let him come here,' said uncle John viciously, 'and I shall give him my opinion of him in pretty strong language.'

'You shall do nothing of the kind,' said Mrs. Heriot with decision. 'No son of mine shall address him one word. Does he imagine we—the Heriots of Marley—sought an alliance with him? He shall never enter my doors. I shall give strict orders to Tapes that, if he comes, he may not be admitted.'

Just at this auspicious moment the door was flung violently open, and a young man, dusty, travel-stained, handsome, stood upon the threshold. It was her hero, her Prince Charming, and Lillas rose to her feet with a little wild, half-suppressed scream, and held out her hands.

'Lillas!' he cried, his whole heart in his voice.

For a moment she tottered, then rushed forward—past them all; past grandmamma's frown, past uncle John's detaining grasp—right into her lover's arms.

There he held her, close against his heart. They did not speak, they scarcely breathed; but they kissed each other passionately, lingeringly, forgetful of all, of everyone, but he of her, and she of him.

Then she lifted her head, and smiled, and sighed—a long, long, happy sigh—and knew that she might dare the world.

Of course there was a terrible fuss made about it just at first, and a general chorus of indignant 'Noes.' But when Diana's marriage with Lord Farnie appeared in public print, and when old Lady Ashurst not only wrote but came in person to entreat the grandmother to use her influence with her son, to induce him to give his consent to Lillas's marriage with Frederic, dissent became weak, and finally died out altogether.

So they were married three months afterwards, and it was a very grand wedding; and Lillas looked lovely; and there never ~~was~~ such a beautiful doll in all the world as the Baby got from London.

Castle-Builders.

ONE brick more, and the whole's complete!
 Laugh in your baby triumph, sweet,
 While expectation
 And proud elation
 Together in your small brain-pan meet.

A higher one than the last we built?
 The last at the crowning touch was spilt,
 But this one's stout,
 And the next, no doubt,
 Like Gilnock Ha' will be wholly gilt!

What if it tumble with this last brick;
 Your tears would spring full sore and quick,
 And one brief hour
 Would see a tower
 Rising, whose stones should faster stick!

There's little cause for jeer or laughter;
 The child comes first, and the boy comes after,
 And manhood next,—
 And all are vexed
 With fall of the fancy-castle's rafter.

And still, as ruin mocks our pain,
 We set ourselves to build again;
 Not only the child
 Is by hope beguiled,
 We are builders all, since the days of Cain!



CASTLE BUILDERS.

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My first and Last Stroke for fame.

It is many years since my youthful dreams were over and I settled down to teach the Classics in the grammar school of a remote country town which modesty forbids me to name. But I was not without ambition at an earlier period in my career, when the walls of Trinity College, Dublin, rang with the eloquence of myself and fellow-undergraduates in our mimic Parliament. 'Personal squabbles' were not unfrequent in these debates; the utmost freedom of play was given to the natural powers; and there were not a few who, hearing me take part in a discussion of Macaulay's estimate of William III., when I so stung the Roman Catholic aspersers of the 'Glorious Memory' by my delicate raillery of the domestic influence of the priests, that one of them retorted by describing all Orangemen as 'the degenerate offspring of the bastards of Cromwellian drummers,'—there were not a few who, seeing the ready wit which I displayed on this and other equally memorable occasions, believed that I was destined to sustain the brightest traditions of Irish oratory. Among that number was myself. I believed then that I had a great future before me, and I saw myself not only shining on terms of equality with the great luminaries of the Forum and the Senate-House, but conquering at the same time a place in the foremost rank of men of letters. I had already excited considerable attention by letters in the Dublin newspapers under the unassuming signatures of 'Juniculus' and 'Junius Junior'—which latter I sometimes fantastically varied as 'Junio Junior,'—and I had comfort as well as pride in feeling that these would serve me as credentials with a view to employment on the London press, till I should eat my prescribed number of dinners at some Inn of Court, and advance by leaps and bounds along the pathways of forensic and Parliamentary distinction.

No sooner, therefore, had I received my degree of B.A. from Old Trinity, than I bade adieu to her venerable walls, and fared eastwards across the channel to the Great Metropolis, as so many of my countrymen have done before me, with two five-pound notes in my pocket, together with a few letters of introduction and a small packet of my contributions to the 'Freeman's Journal.' Arrived in London, I lost not an hour in presenting myself at the office of a great daily journal, which had recently been started to advocate the principles of modern Conservatism. I bore an introduction to the editor, who was an Irishman, a powerful writer and

kind-hearted as he was able, often called upon, and always willing to give a helping hand to a countryman. Mr. O'B—— (alas! he is now dead, so I commit no breach of confidence in giving his initials) was not in when I first called. I strolled, therefore, into the Temple, made some inquiries as to the conditions of entrance into the membership of one of its honourable societies, and amused myself by thinking of the many eminent men who had trod its pavements before me. I was looking at Goldsmith's Buildings, and wondering whether next generation would find the name of another Irishman inscribed upon some block of stately chambers in this great home and nursery of the law, when I stumbled against a passer-by, whom I at once recognised as a fellow-graduate of Trinity. He was several years senior to me, and had already made his position in London both as a journalist and as a barrister. I had chanced to meet him some months before in the rooms of a common friend. I hastened now to recall myself to his recollection, and when he said that he remembered me perfectly, I explained to him with what objects I had come to London—not, of course, making him the confidant of my ultimate hopes and ambitions, such as my dream of becoming name-father to a portion of the Temple.

As it chanced, O'C—— was one of Mr. O'B——'s staff, and was at that moment bound for the office, to excuse himself if possible from an engagement which he had made for that very evening. He had undertaken to go down to the House of Commons, listen to the debate on the Indian Budget, and write a leading article upon it for next day; but a brief of great importance had just been handed to him, and he wanted to get out of his newspaper work, and give his whole mind to the coveted opportunity.

The thought flashed across my mind, that here was a chance for me. The very last subject that had been up in our Debating Society was whether England was justified from the point of view either of expediency or of moral right in retaining possession of India. It was true that the wrongs of Ireland had occupied a larger share of the debate than either the wrongs of India or its value to England as a dependency, but I, as a staunch Orangeman, had insisted that the discussion should be confined to the topic immediately before the House, had spoken at great length and under much applause, and had subsequently addressed to the 'Freeman' a trenchant reply to some correspondent who had called in question the blessings of English rule to the Hindoos. My arguments were fresh on my mind, and I felt completely master of the subject, but I did not dare to volunteer to take O'C——'s place. We walked towards the office in silence, O'C——

very much absorbed, but apparently never thinking of me as a substitute, till, just as we reached the door, he suddenly said, 'Do you know anything of finance? Do you think you could write upon the Indian Budget?' I did not confess to him that the state of my own fortunes was such that I had never been deeply interested in financial operations, and that my knowledge of the subject was only such as enabled me occasionally to borrow half-a-crown, but I replied guardedly that I had devoted a good deal of time to the study of Indian politics. 'Ah, I see,' he said musingly, 'but not specially to finance;' and he went upstairs to the editor's room, having kindly volunteered to take my letter with him and to say a word in support of its recommendations.

I had not waited above three minutes when a boy appeared to conduct me to the editor. I found O'C—— in grave consultation with him. None of the staff, it appeared, could take O'C——'s place; they were all either otherwise occupied, or out of town. He had mentioned that I had some knowledge of Indian politics; would it be sufficient? The editor was doubtful, still he welcomed me very kindly, said he was always glad to see literary recruits from the old country, and asked when I had last seen the gentleman whose introduction I brought, and who was, he said, a very old friend of his. Had I ever written on Indian politics? I assured him that I had, in the 'Freeman's Journal;' that was to say, I had written letters, not leading articles. 'Oh, come,' he said, brightening up, 'that shows that you take an interest in the subject.' To make a long story short, Mr. O'B——, who was one of the best-natured men in the world, and would have been grieved if O'C—— had lost the chance which this case seemed to promise him, agreed after a little hesitation that I should that evening go to the House of Commons and write the article on the Indian Budget. There was no time to be lost. It was already past four o'clock. In a few minutes the Under Secretary for India would be 'on his legs;' so, giving me a few directions and the leader-writer's ticket of admission to the Press Gallery, Mr. O'B—— hurriedly dismissed me to my task.

I was a proud man when I issued from the office, and, pausing to drink a glass of sherry at the nearest bar, hailed a hansom and told the man to drive to the House of Commons. 'Here I am,' I said, as I threw myself back in my cab and lighted a cigarette to steady my nerves—I had acquired a habit of smoking at Trinity—'not yet half-a-dozen hours in London, and already I am on my way to the House of Commons, not exactly as a member, but still as a sort of member, something almost higher than a member, a representative of a great daily newspaper. I am already wielding

the power of one of the great organs and formative influences of public opinion.' I was still pursuing this pleasing vein of reflection, and thinking of the thousands who would hang with delight upon my words next day, when my cabman pulled up in Westminster Palace Yard. Studying to conceal my exultation, and to assume an air as if this were noways out of my regular line of business, I asked a policeman to direct me to the entrance for the Press Gallery. He complied with a polite deference which increased my joy at finding myself a member of an august fraternity. 'Show this gentleman the Press Gallery,' he said to an attendant, when we reached a little door in a cloistral passage. The attendant examined my Press ticket, and motioned me to follow him up a winding stone stair. As we passed a window, I heard a sound of continuous speaking. 'Confound it,' was my first impression, 'the Under Secretary is up. I am late.' And I felt disappointed. But the next instant there flashed through my mind, suggested by the measured sing-song of the speaker, Wordsworth's famous line—

The hard dry see-saw of his horrible bray.

'That will do for one sentence in my article,' I exclaimed to myself. Elated with this happy thought, I joyfully bounded after my conductor, who presently, striding through a long corridor, handed me over to a stout little man with a bald head and a beaming countenance. 'What paper are you for, sir?' I again presented my ticket. 'This way,' he said, and guided me through a labyrinth of passages and lobbies filled with lounging telegraph boys and busy writers. I checked him for one moment to ask him where was the refreshment bar, feeling that if the sitting was protracted nature might crave for sustenance, not to say stimulation. 'This gentleman will tell you all you want,' he said, and handed me over to a very substantial official with a glittering yellow badge displayed over his capacious stomach. 'Tell this gentleman all he wants,' he added; 'he has not been here before.' 'All right,' returned the badge-bearer, 'I will see to him. Follow me, sir.' I followed, and in an instant more emerged from a dark passage into a dazzling blaze of light, the full splendour of the British House of Commons.

Momentarily disconcerted, I quickly recovered my composure and glided with noiseless swiftness into the pen to which the attendant beckoned me. I glanced at the galleries opposite; they were crowded, tier upon tier, with an attentive audience. The side galleries were almost empty. In front of me sat a row of reporters, each in a separate pen, scribbling away as if for their

lives. My immediate neighbours seemed to take but a languid interest in the proceedings; they were, I afterwards learnt, reporters waiting for their shift. These things I took in at a rapid glance, and then I began to explore the vast gulf in the centre of the magnificent room, from which the voice of an invisible speaker ascended in a dry monotonous chant. I saw little but empty benches. Here and there were stray members with their hats pulled over their eyes, apparently trying to go to sleep. I tried in vain to get into the stream of the Under Secretary's discourse, for it was indeed he that was speaking, and from his glib quotation of figures I gathered that he was deep in the details of the Budget. But I could not catch the figures distinctly, and when he discussed the malikana, and processes against defaulters, and travelling allowances, and economy in the supply of stationery, I had but the dimmest idea of what he was driving at. I stood up and craned forward to see whether a look at the orator would help me. Suddenly I heard a warning 'Hist!' The sound came from the substantial attendant, who motioned me to sit down, and cautioned me in a stage whisper that it was against the rules to stand up. Relapsing into my seat, I assured myself that I could easily catch up the Under Secretary whenever he reached a natural break in his statement, and meantime gazed at the curiously lighted ceiling. The roof of the House was, if it is not an Irishism to say so, a window, the mellowed light streaming through frosted panes with coloured borders. From speculating how the gas-jets were arranged above this vitreous screen, I fell to thinking of by-gone scenes in a debating society with which I was more familiar, and pleasantly recalling my own triumphs in that arena. By-and-by I might have been lulled into slumber by the soothing monotone of the Under Secretary, but I was roused from my reverie by hearing the invisible voice say—'So much for the Land Revenue.' I instantly assumed an attitude of attention, and inclined my ear so as not to lose a syllable. 'Now for——' he went on, but at that instant Big Ben began to strike, the reporters in the front seats bustled out of their pens, the relay behind hastened to replace them, and for a few seconds I failed to catch a single word, though I used my ears as intently as if I had been a Red Indian on the war trail. Still I persevered, feeling confident that the Under Secretary could not have got quite beyond the reach of a vigilant listener. My hopes were re-awakened when he said, 'Some objections have been raised to this source of revenue,' and paused apparently to arrange some papers. 'Now,' said I to myself, 'I shall have something to discuss.' But alas! just as the speaker recommenced, the gallery attendant thought

fit to move past me, and the creaking of his shoes effectually diverted my attention from objection No 1. The return of the same monster on his purposeless errand quenched in like manner objection No. 2. I did not dare to swear at the ruffian openly, but I could not help registering in strong language an opinion that if I had anything to do with the management of the gallery, every attendant should be velvet-shod, or at least that a strict interdict should be put on creaking leather. Again and again in the course of that evening I suffered tortures from this abominable official, who always chose the most vitally important moments for squeaking along the narrow passage. I wished him and his shoes a thousand times at the bottom of the sea or even deeper, but that did not help me out of my difficulties. And he was not my only tormentor. There was always somebody passing out or in and making a noise, to rob me of the reward of my earnest attention. My neighbours waiting their turn in the reporters' boxes, thought the whole subject of the Indian Budget a bore, and did not scruple to say so in tones which completely drowned the voice of the Under Secretary in their immediate vicinity. They indulged also in reminiscences and comparisons which might have been interesting at another time, but which struck me in the circumstances as being decidedly out of place. I did not care to know that they considered the voice of the present Under Secretary less flexible than that of his predecessor, and I did not go there to learn that nobody could make a financial statement like Gladstone. I wanted to hear this financial statement, and in that object I was utterly baffled. I knew as little about the finances of India, when the Under Secretary ended, as I did when he began.

Though less buoyant at the conclusion of the Under Secretary's statement than when I entered the House, I was still hopeful. 'I can easily,' thought I, 'get at his principal points from the debate.' One point I certainly did get with great clearness and amplitude from the next speaker, who, after condemning the administration of the Indian Exchequer as a whole, and declaring that the accounts were speciously contrived so as to make the revenue appear larger than it really was, launched into a terrific onslaught on the dealings of the Government in regard to irrigation in Bengal. What precisely the Government had done I could not make out, because their action was confused in my mind, owing to imperfect hearing, with that of an East Indian Irrigation and Canal Company, but I gathered enough to let me see that they had committed grievous blunders. They had made canals or encouraged the making of canals in that very part of India where canals were not wanted.

The rainfall in Lower Bengal was not only sufficient in quantity, but 'regular in its incidence.' I made a note of this last expression. Irrigate the Indus Valley, or the basin of the Upper Ganges, or the Southern Peninsula, but why irrigate Bengal? The natives, this trenchant critic declared, would not buy the water if you brought it to their doors; they did not want it. Here were facts for me, and I entered fully also into the orator's ridicule of a canal which was dug for irrigation purposes in Midnapore within reach of the tide. The idea of irrigating with salt water was too absurd. It was evidently a Government job, and I resolved that I would occupy several sentences of my article in scathing denunciation.

I was not able to follow the Opposition critic with equal clearness through the whole of his long speech, but I felt cheerful and sanguine when he sat down. However he had succeeded in ~~dismaying~~ the Treasury benches, he had greatly raised my spirits. Eleven o'clock was the hour by which I had promised to send in my article; it was now eight. I resolved to seek some refreshment and to smoke a cigarette while I collected my thoughts. I fear I thought more about my own good fortune and my newly acquired power than about the Indian Budget during this pleasing occupation. When I returned, a very drowsy speaker was on his legs. I listened to him for a moment, but he failed to 'take me with him,' as Falstaff says. Thereupon I determined without more ado to ~~begin~~ my article, first glancing round the House and catching the ideas which I embodied in the following opening paragraph.

'The great question whether India ought or ought not to be restored to the chaotic and chronic corruption of native misrule will not be materially advanced by the debate which took place last night on the Indian Budget. As we glanced round the House from our coign of vantage, we could not discern in the drowsy aspect of the few assembled senators, lounging in recumbent postures on the half-empty benches, any indication of that acute interest with which the affairs of our great Indian Empire should always be discussed. It is true the figures presented to the British Senate regarding our distant dependency were of bewildering intricacy, and were probably not followed with complete intelligence by any of those present with the exception of the sprinkling of dusky faces and glittering black eyes which faced us in the opposite gallery, and those honourable members who to their everlasting honour have made the affairs of India their special and peculiar province of Parliamentary activity.'

It was nine o'clock by the time I had elaborated this exordium. I had still two hours before me. But there were several points on which I felt that my information was not complete. The Opposi-

tion critic had said there was a deficit when the accounts were properly looked at. Had the Under Secretary claimed a surplus? If so, how did he make it out? I had not been able to catch a single figure of the estimates, and could not have guessed the total within several millions. What was I to do? I listened for another quarter of an hour in the vain hope of getting some light. One orator more distinguished for fervour than distinctness of utterance was furiously denouncing the opium revenue. I made some notes; still, I could not help feeling that in a financial article I must have some figures. It suddenly struck me that I might get what I wanted from the reporter of the journal which I had the honour to represent. I hurried out in search of him. His notes had gone to the office an hour and a half before, and he himself was at the moment in the gallery. Should I go to the office after them? In that case I might miss an important speech. I hastily drank some brandy and soda, and went back to my post to hear a declamation on the salt tax, which left me wondering whether it had been imposed or withdrawn, raised or lowered. I could only gather that, whether it was a fact or a project, it was an iniquitous thing to tax the necessities of life. Somewhat disconcerted, I went and had some more brandy and soda, and made another vain search for the reporter of the Under Secretary's statement. On my return, at a quarter to ten, I was accosted by a gentleman in the neighbouring pen, who asked me if I knew the exact amount of the revenue from guaranteed railways. I did not. He said it was the most muddled statement he had ever heard in his life. I agreed with him, and glanced at a sheet covered with jottings of figures which lay on the desk before him. He went on writing, and occasionally biting his fingers in angry perplexity. I studied his memoranda carefully, but could make nothing of them. They consisted of a wilderness of sums; he had trusted to his memory for the items to which they belonged.

As ten o'clock struck, I began to get a little desperate. It was too late now to master the figures of the estimates even if I had them. Therefore I resolved to do without them and to confine myself to the principal topics which had been made the subject of debate. Giving up all further attempts to get anything definite from the dreary speakers, and uttering one parting imprecation when another creaking passage of the badged official deprived me of a remark which seemed important, I plunged into my article. I denounced the Government hotly for 'cooking' their accounts. I discussed at length, and with acrimony, their futile and superfluous provisions for the irrigation of Bengal. I hinted at the most corrupt of motives for the excavation of the Hidgelee Tidal Canal,

and made merry over the idea of fostering the growth of maize with salt water. I stigmatised the opium revenue and the salt tax as financial expedients unworthy of a civilised nation. I wound up by saying that, if the whole financial system of India were not promptly reformed, the much-enduring population would rise in their millions and hurl our tax-gatherers and Competition Wallahs into the sea. It was five minutes to eleven when I had finished, and I hurried off with my production as fast as a hansom could carry me to Mr. O'B——.

Mr. O'B—— received me with a smile and thanked me as I handed him the article. 'Did you find it difficult to write in the gallery?' he asked. 'The noise disturbed me a little,' I answered; 'but I have no doubt I should soon get accustomed to it.' Seeing that he was busy, I did not linger, but, finding that nothing more was required of me, bounded off with a light heart to my hotel, where I lost ten shillings at billiards without a pang. Next morning, as soon as I awoke, I rang for the paper. It had not yet come in, and I awaited its arrival with some impatience but with a considerable amount of pride. When it came, I seized upon it eagerly and looked for the article on the Indian Budget. The opening sentence ran:—'The financial statement made by the Under Secretary for India last night was eminently satisfactory.' This surprised me, and glancing down the column I saw that it was filled with figures, which surprised me still more. I could not find one sentence of the scathing criticism which I had elaborated with such pains. The details of the Budget were minutely discussed, and everything was presented in the most rose-coloured light. All at once it flashed upon me that O'B——'s paper was on the Government side, and that I had made a fool of myself and hopelessly missed my chance.

I was too crest-fallen to present myself again to Mr. O'B——, but I saw O'C—— and obtained some excellent advice from him. The sum of it was that I must go back to Ireland and master a certain number of subjects. I might then try again. I came back to Ireland with renewed hope and undiminished ambition, but somehow I drifted into my present position as the master of a grammar school. I drifted also into marriage, and in domestic happiness and the content of an honourable and tranquil occupation have lost all cause to regret my early misadventures. I may add that I have forsworn tobacco, and am a practical teetotaller.

P. DALY O'DONOVAN.

The Actor's Conquest.

BY PERCY FITZGERALD.

It was at Ostend, which every year seems to dress itself more gaily, like a peasant girl brought to a fashionable town. There the sun shines and rages, tempered, however, by the sea, which rolls in with a greater and more abundant volume than anywhere else. The Dyke, the everlasting Dyke, where all the world and his wife crowds and hurries to grow drunk on the breezes, has its reputation. There have I been sitting for a week or more with the rest, watching, reading, chattering, smoking, marking crowds of Germans and others making up a sort of gay procession, with the most ungrateful solace that every face was an unknown one. A sort of pasha-like existence: bright sun, gay colours, cool linen suits—seeming like small sails set off against the rich cobalt background—these were the charms of this agreeable watering-place.

It was very pleasant until I heard a voice, an accent that seemed familiar, and turning round recognised the handsome face of Algernon Beaufort, the well-known and fashionable young actor, arrayed in a snowy linen suit, his fair delicate skin not yet browned or bronzed, and his dainty moustaches turned up like the wings of a humming bird or tom-tit—an image he would have resented. Everyone repeated that he was a gentleman's son; though, as for acting, he was of the 'stick' kind, and acted when he pleased, and yet never wanted an engagement; but his real performances were on other stages, in ball-rooms, at parties in country-houses, where all 'the Countesses' were delighted to have him. He belonged to the same club as myself, and I confess to being unreasonable enough not to relish him, his perpetual simper of superiority, and the sort of 'cleverness' he certainly possessed; or his fascinating trick—as he thought it—of half closing his eyes, in a dreamy fashion, when he spoke.

'You here?' was his greeting to me, as one should say, 'You don't know Countesses.' And there was at the same time an air of vexation in his manner, as though he were amazed that I should be there. 'Always the way!' he added; 'you come to a place for retirement, and you might as well take the committee of the club with you.'

'Why, what has happened?' I asked innocently; 'something is wrong.'

He coloured. 'Why should there be?' he asked abruptly. 'But you are always chaffing.' However, he was not wholly a bad fellow, and presently recovered his good humour.

That evening we were sitting together, when he became confidential. On asking about some of his 'Countess' friends, the Pierreponts—'Lady Mary, you know'—he broke out with some bitterness: 'Yes, I knew that story would get over here. What! pretend you have not heard? I suppose it's in all the Society papers.' 'What?' I asked, astonished. 'I have heard nothing. Oh, you know, their daughter. They gave out, I suppose, that I have been refused. Nothing of the kind. I give you my honour. I authorise you to contradict it. Mr. Pierrepont chose to speak to me seriously, as he called it. But I can be as proud as he, and a hint was sufficient. But I may match him yet.'

I saw that he was sore on the point, and could follow the whole episode. Indeed, a letter which reached me a few days later from a club-mate, contained an explanation of the whole, beginning with: 'You have, no doubt, heard how Beaufort got his *congé* from the Pierreponts; though they say the girl is attached to him. It will take down his conceit a little.'

At dinner there were two seats vacant, which had at first escaped the head waiter, who was leading the way, and he had to conduct two ladies under his charge—new arrivals—as prisoners, back again round the long arm of the table, before he could fix them in secure anchorage. The seats were next me.

It was a composed, widow-like matron, her silks rustling and flapping like a yacht 'going about,' who would have walked across the stage of Drury Lane Theatre of a crowded night without a flutter, while behind her tripped, under shelter of that break-water, her daughter, or 'child,' as she would call her. The bullet-headed men, with polls suggesting hair-brushing by machinery, and bibs on their chests, interrupted their gobbling to follow her, as the greedy eyes seemed eager to have *her* too on their plates as the next remove. Lean ladies lifted their double glasses to inspect her with quite a sniffing air, as if she were an intruder. She moved along smiling, as if someone was whispering a grand joke, a little confused. A bright, gay, elegantly-made girl of about seventeen, but whom her mamma, it was clear, for the next ten years—after as well as before marriage—would look on as a helpless child.

Now they are in their places, the waiters having propelled *their chairs close in behind.*

The young maiden looked at me for a second with a smile that a reciprocal one would have turned into a laugh, then at those opposite, with the same greeting, then at her mother. That business-like lady was not distracted by such frivolity from the matter in hand—the bill of fare—on which she was already taking counsel with a major-like-looking gentleman, with whom she was already intimate. We became confidential. They were just arrived, she told me, from London—they were come to stay at Ostend. Lady Mantower had recommended it to ‘mamma.’

How long would they stay?

A month, ‘mamma’ proposed; but if ‘mamma’ didn’t like it, she would go on to Spa.

‘And you would be left here?’

A laugh of wonder was the reply. It was plain to me that this little being was no more than one of the seals or ‘charms’ in the ‘bunch’ at the end of the chain that reposed on ‘mamma’s’ voluminous waist—that she was trained to see all things through her eyes as through an opera-glass.

This was Jessica (or ‘Jess,’ as her mamma styled her), with Pretymann as surname. A widow and only daughter—the only daughter being an elegant little creature, most delicately cut in shape, face, and figure, and full of an engaging confidence. Already we were friends. She spoke with her face, eyes, and gestures more than with words, and was eager to know all about the place. ‘Only think, mamma,’ she cried, ‘it is a most charming place, and we shall so enjoy ourselves.’

‘How can you tell that?’ said the matron, speaking rather to a *vol-au-vent* round the corner, as it were, which a waiter was tenderly projecting. ‘How do you know?’

‘Oh, he says so—this gentleman.’

‘It is the height of the season,’ I said; ‘everybody is here: notabilities, celebrities, obscurities.’

‘Who?’ almost cried out Jessica; ‘do please tell them to me.’

I was puzzled with whom to begin. ‘Well, do you see that gentleman sitting a few places down?’

‘What! that interesting-looking person! Oh! who is he? Oh! *what* a romantic look he has.’

‘Not at all,’ I said. ‘He is quite an ordinary prosaic being, that loves a good dinner. So much for interpreting looks.’

‘But there is no harm in that,’ said Miss Jess. ‘Do tell me who he is.’

‘Guess: a man of fashion—a young lord?’

‘No, no,’ she said gravely, and without intending to be sarcastic, ‘he is *something* clever.’

'What would you say to an actor? He can be seen any night at the Olio Theatre for a shilling.'

'Or for half-a-guinea if you take a stall,' she said quickly. 'I knew he was something remarkable, and I remember him now,' she cried eagerly. 'Mamma, we saw him in Claude Melnotte, two years ago; don't you recollect, mamma? Oh, I remember him perfectly.' She said this so enthusiastically that I think the exquisite heard her, and looked over with one of his favourite and most effective 'stall' smiles. He was accustomed, however, to 'this sort of thing,' and required it as his due. Mamma didn't distract herself in the least, and said, 'Perhaps so, my dear.'

There was a refreshing amount of enthusiasm about this young creature, and I could read plainly in her delicate and tremulous lips that life was all seriousness with her, and that in her case the French proverb, '*On ne badine pas avec l'amour*,' would be exemplified with cruel logic. I own to being a little provoked at seeing so fair and interesting a little creature attracted by what I knew was only a bit of tinsel, or perhaps tinfoil, if it were worth deciding which is the inferior of those base imitations.

Mr. Beaufort had only to come in contact with that artless nature to reveal his true disposition with fatal effect: in fact, he would, as it were, take off his lady-like boots, and show that his feet were merely of clay.

That night, at the Kursaal, I saw my new friends seated under the glass roof listening to the orchestra, on the left the great ocean rolling in slowly with a tranquil monotone, like a pedal bass. These are the welcome hours at Ostend—the sun going down, far-off ships gliding by, and the dense crowd strolling up and down on the Dyke; close by me was the eager little lady, with eyes darting from this object to that, her lips smiling welcome and greeting to faces that turned to hers with good-natured appreciation. I could not help drawing near; then I too was greeted with surprise and delight, being a sort of friend in that waste of strange faces. I came, and we talked through the brazen chords of the music. The matron was gracious; she had already found it a little wearisome, and was accustomed to have her 'talks' at different times of the day, as other people take their meals. She was now colloquially hungry.

'That young man,' she said, 'you were telling Jess of at dinner, the good-looking actor, I know about him: he is often at Lady Canterly's, and I know says he is of good birth, and has gentle blood in his veins.'

'That I know too,' I said, smiling—'I mean, his saying so.'

'Oh! if we were to go into these things—— Nowadays, too,

society is mixed enough, and all is fish that is in the net. By the way, there he is going by.'

So he was, sauntering with his usual ineffably supercilious air, looking at every face with such a glance as the police give who stand at the gangway of a steamer at a French port, when they are looking out for a suspicious character. 'Would you like—?' I said, interrogating.

'Do,' she said in the same tone, and the next moment I had stopped him. The process was more awkward than might be supposed, for it was not impossible that he might dismiss the proposal with a shrug or contemptuous shake of his head, quite intelligible at a distance. Instead, he put up his glass and investigated what was proposed to him. Fearful that it would bring mortification to that wistful face, I said, 'Come! this is not the Row; don't throw away your airs and graces here.'

He simpered good-humouredly, and consented to be led up to the two ladies; not only that, but he behaved graciously, and even exerted himself, that is, imported all his little boxes of tricks and *minauderies*; uncorked his small flask of effervescing stuff, which he considered to be his captivating art, all rather flat and insipid enough. After he had bestowed this for about half an hour on the pair, I returned to see the result. It was charming. He was charming—all was charming. And this was the verdict of mother and daughter. For 'mamma,' he knew some of the Countesses that mamma knew, and for Jess he talked so beautifully, and in such delicious tones. She had gained his attention—'won his heart,' I was going to say in mistake—by describing the very dress he had worn in Claude Melnotte. He had told them of all his engagements, not at theatres, but at country houses—in short, he was gratified, for he saw that he had gained these two admirers.

But that night, as we strolled along the Digue, the moon shining on the waves, the old clocks chiming in the town behind, he characteristically put the question to me, 'Who are those people?'

Pretyman! why, they were Pretyman & Co., the country bankers. She was left a widow and badly off. He knew all about them, and he conveyed very plainly that they were not the sort of article for him.

During the next few days I watched the progress of this affair. Mamma, I could see, was bent, for reasons of her own, on pleasing this gentleman, listening to him, and flattering him in her most extravagant style. Her daughter, I could see, asked no better pleasure than to sit near them and listen, her pretty face reflecting all the moods of the conversation, which was indeed more a mono-

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'SHE LOOKED TOWARDS HIM WITH THE BRIGHTEST RECOGNITION'

logue delivered by the exquisite—a yarn of his engagements, and how he was pressed to visit houses—he, with a pleasant frankness, telling them he was longing to get away from this dull place. Why did he remain? He had nothing better to do. Mrs. Pretzman listened to his tittle-tattle with interest. Thus the days went by, and each day I noticed he graciously came and sat a short time with the mamma and her daughter, and thus discoursed. Each day, too, it was to be seen that the young creature was more and more absorbed in the attractive actor. There was a favourite café of his in the Great Place, where he would go after breakfast to smoke and have his ‘little glass’ of cognac, arrayed during those sultry days in all the gorgeousness of snowy linen suit, spotless ‘jean,’ from head to foot, the delicate colour of his cheeks glowing against this foil. As I sat near him, he would say, languidly motioning with his cigar :

‘There she goes ! watch her.’ And sure enough, there would trip round the corner, indifferently sheltered from the raging sun by her parasol, the delicately constructed little maid, the friendly smile on, her eyes shyly cast down, but with a consciousness that I could interpret even at a distance. It was not till she had nearly crossed, that she turned with even greater shyness, as though it had been an effort, and looked towards him with the brightest recognition. He rose, fell into a graceful attitude, and took off his Panama hat to the ground.

‘The regular thing,’ he said with a simper, ‘about every second morning. Poor little soul !’

From this moment I saw that it was a serious matter.

‘Now she is going to read by the sea ; has been shopping—only think—in this fearful sun. By-and-by I must drop down in the same direction. She knows that I breakfast here.’

‘I wonder,’ I said angrily, ‘how you can go on in this way. It’s too heartless. Choose some of those women about here, well able to take care of themselves, not this poor delicate little soul.’

He smiled with pleasure. ‘You know yourself,’ he said, ‘it’s not my fault. Come, be just. You know it’s not. They came to me, not I to them. Good gracious ! why, at home I have a trunkful of letters that I could show you—I mean the trunk only.’

Good-looking actors always tell you this, but in Beaufort’s instance—spoiled child of ‘the Countesses’—it was, I believe, no boast or ‘flam.’ I had to own that his view was right.

‘I do wish,’ he went on, ‘the women would leave me alone ; it’s always the way. Here’s this place full of Germans, yet here the old work begins. If I had gone to Scarborough, indeed——’

‘Well, I would go there,’ I said. ‘What can you want here? Do, that’s a good fellow.’

He glanced at me through his half-closed eyelids, and shook his head. 'Well, business—business keeps me—I have a reason.'

'What! a manager—an engagement?'

'Pooh, saving my presence, you should add,' he said, taking out his scented handkerchief and shaking it round him. 'Don't name the thing. It wants all the sea breezes of this place to sweeten the air after that word.'

I had indeed noticed how busy was this little lady in exploring the streets and shops, attended by her maid, mamma loving the cool retirement of her apartments—the windows thrown wide open, and the wooden shutters drawn close and making the room almost dark. Thus she reposed, loving the siesta, and being 'unequal,' as she declared, to moving or exertion. But often, often, did I see her pretty daughter, with the shy eyes that dropped to the ground, while a grave air took possession of her lips, as though fearful the passers-by would snatch her secret. It was wonderful what circuitous routes she took, and how she lingered at shop-windows, and how she generally contrived to succeed in what she was seeking for. Care-hardened campaigner as I was—Inspector of society—I was vastly interested in her little manœuvres, they were so genuine. 'Twas, unhappily, too plain, that she was staking more than she could afford in the bewitching game. However, he would go away, there would be some pain and perhaps tearing of that 'fair flesh,' and much soreness left, but it would heal in time. So I hoped.

The following evening we were seated on the Dyke by the sea, the crowd slowly elbowing its way by and interrupting the breeze; Beaufort, as usual, doing the party honour by taking his coffee with them. I almost fancied that what I had said had made an impression, and I noted that his eyes fell with more interest on his devoted little worshipper. She seemed encouraged even by this faint testimonial of appreciation, and became very gay, and her daring eyes roved about full of mischief, resting even on some stout Belgian 'swells,' who, in pure ignorance, fancied that this was a token of admiration, and made a note of the same.

'New faces!' she suddenly called out. 'Look, mamma.' And we all looked.

It was a party of three that had just entered the glass-roofed temple; an attendant carrying their chairs obsequiously before them. It was some ladies, with a stately girl, with a gentleman, one tall and black-haired, walking with a haughty disdain, as though she were in the Park at home. She was dressed in white from head to foot, was a brilliant grand creature, who, as I suddenly looked from her to Miss Jessica, made the latter fade as it were, taking all the colour out of her.

But the effect of the apparition on Mr. Beaufort was this:—

‘Good gracious!’ he cried, and hurriedly rose, pushing back his chair almost on his poor little companion, quite careless and unconscious of her altogether. We three followed his movements with our eyes. I saw the welcome he received, and the invitation to sit with them. He looked about for a chair, and, seeing the one he had left, rushed to seize it, and so absorbed was he that he actually said to his late companion, as though she was one of the crowd, ‘Beg your pardon,’ and drew it away rather impatiently. O! the pained, rueful, mortified little face he left behind!

‘Lady Pierrepont’s daughters,’ said the mamma, in business-like tones; ‘a striking-looking girl, the eldest.’ Her daughter answered mechanically, ‘Yes, mamma,’ her eyes fixed on the party, which was animated enough. It was the greeting of old friends. Thenceforth I had a new object to watch, not without a certain trouble at heart, for I guessed what was coming; for from Mr. Beaufort’s chests and portmanteaux was now evolved the most splendid raiment, which he had not thought worth while to display before, a proceeding, alas! too clearly noticed by his little admirer, whose wistful and troubled glances showed what was in her heart. Not, indeed, that he deserted his former friends, for he came graciously as before to sit with them; but when the grander party emerged in haughty procession upon the public places he unceremoniously rose, and with plain eagerness hurried to join them. But I was presently to discover something more. There was an admirer in the train of the stately damsel, the son of an ironmaster of enormous wealth, who was quite eligible as material to be ‘welded,’ to use a suitable word, with the finer aristocratic metal. This is according to fashionable laws, and it was said that Mr. Barnes was quite ‘gone’ with the young lady, who had only to speak when it suited her. He was a tall, well-built, manly, though scarcely refined-looking young man; and all that education, dress, and finish could do had been applied. But he lacked training, and went directly to work, showing what he felt rather too plainly for success. A rather indignant exclamation which he uttered loudly as he passed gave me a further revelation: ‘An actor fellow, like that!’ he said to her, rather scornfully, which made the lady toss her head and laugh. Sometimes there were angry discussions between her and her mamma, into which I could see that that young lady imported her head-tossing, and almost contemptuous shrugging of her shoulders. She was self-willed, and would do as she pleased, and perhaps was not unwilling to keep the two admirers in her train.

But lo! just as a fretful, almost painful air began to appear

on the face of our little heroine, we were relieved by a complete change in the handsome actor, who, as if he had completely sounded the mercenary soul of his haughty *belle*, or had been taking thought to measure her with the gentle little Flower of Dunblane, had now cast in his lot with the latter. Now returned the bloom to her cheeks, the sparkle to her eye. His devotion was so conspicuous that all noticed it. The English gossips declared it was a flirtation and a regular 'conquest.' Her delight was unconcealed. She openly showed her pride and exultation. No king or queen of that fair land could walk along this Digue with more sense of majesty than she did. And with him the change was not less marked. The former carelessness and passive tolerance of attention was gone. He was really exerting all his powers, unpacking all his resources, just as he would unpack all the recesses of his costly dressing-case, to captivate this little adorer. Her mother began to display a hostile manner and dark looks; but the truth was, she was unprepared for this turn, and knew not what a reserve of strength or self-will was in her gentle child, when she was roused in such a way. She was not a firm person, and could not carry out her own way without a sort of violence. Her little high-spirited child was developing into a heroine.

One evening they came down to the pier, mamma silent and angry, and the daughter with glistening eyes. In a few seconds I saw that there had been a scene—or rebellion—and she was smiling and 'bridling,' and affecting to be gay. Then the hero came up and joined them—for he was quite indifferent to the elder lady's hostility—and I could see she made him her confidant at once, or at least somehow conveyed to him that she had suffered for him, and was suffering still. This claim for sympathy, and the pretty bit of acting with which it was accompanied, made her extremely interesting. Confidence, she felt, was due to one, stranger as he was, to whom she had given her whole heart for ever.

To do the handsome actor justice, when he saw this state of things, he seemed inclined to draw away, but some strange spirit of desperation made him renew his devotion.

'Surely,' I said to him, joining him one night about eleven o'clock when he was pacing the Digue, and the cool night breezes were coming in from the sea, 'surely you cannot have any serious designs in this matter?'

'No designs in the world,' he said.

'Then I think it utterly heartless—cruel.'

'I know it,' was his answer. 'And why do I do it? Because I

am heartless and cruel. But everyone is cruel and heartless to me.'

'Not this poor child.'

'It is base. I don't want you or anyone to tell me. But I am driven to it; you don't know the way I have been fooled and mocked and played with. Is it not natural when I find that one really appreciates me, and is ready to die for me, as I believe she would, that I should be drawn to her? We are not all logicians like you, or made of granite. It's not my doing, I tell you; I don't want girls to fall in love with me.'

'Then withdraw—speak out plainly like a man, and let it go no farther—leave this place.'

'O, I can't, indeed,' he said angrily, 'I am not called upon to do that. You don't know, you can't understand all I have gone through, the cruelly scandalous fashion in which I have been treated, though I don't blame *her*.'

'Do you mean Miss Pretzman?' I said.

'No,' he said pettishly. 'But why do I talk?—it only concerns myself. If I only had a little resolution to break from this sort of stuff altogether!'

'Do,' I said; 'get on board the packet, sail away, and get back to the Countesses—that's your best course.'

'I am half inclined to think so,' he said doubtfully. 'Break from the whole set—such folly! It only wants a little courage.'

'Do so,' I said, 'or else, if you really think you could make this little creature happy, and be happy with her, why should you not—'

'Do you?' said he rapidly; 'I have thought of that; I have only to speak, I know, and every day I feel more drawn to her. If it were only in another place, and under other conditions— But no, it would be more heartless still. You cannot guess. This devotion was begun for a purpose, I am ashamed to say. But as I stand here, I never thought it would be taken so seriously. But I have felt twinges, bitter twinges, all the time. I declare,' he said abruptly, 'it shall come to an end. It's too childish. I'll take your advice, and be off by the morning steamer.'

'Will you give your word?'

'I do,' he said.

We had come back to the archway of the hotel. It was late, and the commissioner put a letter in his hand

'A lady left it,' he said, with a meaning smile. 'A tall and very distinguished lady. She said it was to be given to you the instant you came in.' Beaufort seized it, and, I saw, read it with intense excitement. The old false simper came back to him. He *was scarcely conscious* of my presence.

'You won't forget,' I said; 'you promised——'

'What promise? Oh yes, you may rely on me. Not a word, mind, not a whisper to anyone, till I am gone—mind! Good-bye: it is certain that I shall go, so you may be easy in your mind as to the little girl.'

Then he gave orders as to his bill, luggage, &c. This readiness puzzled me, and, I feared, foreboded no good for the poor 'little girl,' spoken of thus lightly, and perhaps tossing at that moment on her bed in a fevered dream.

Early after the fresh morning walk I went down to see the packet go off, keeping myself, I own, under cover. No Beaufort. The unworthy fellow had failed: nothing better could be expected. But passing by the hotel, I could not help asking about him. Yes, he had gone—gone by the early train at six. What did it mean?

By noon, however, there was a whisper of a curious story afloat in the English colony. Lady Pierrepont, after a scene of some confusion in the hotel, had herself departed, having sent her daughter on before, as she said. But the agitation at the hotel did not correspond with this, for Mademoiselle, we were told, had gone away by the first train. In short, it was reported that there had been an elopement!

Alas! in the interest and excitement caused by this *welcome* bit of news, no one, or at least few, thought of the fierce stab that would be given to one trusting, tender little heart, so cruelly played with and cheated. I trembled as I thought of the result of the disclosure, lightly made as a good joke by some *fille de chambre* in the hotel. I dared not think of the mortification, the blankness, the sickness of soul, incurable during that weary never-ending day, for no one saw either mother or daughter. They kept enclosed until the good-natured and welcome darkness came. Then the two, veiled and muffled, gladly hurried into a carriage, and got on board the packet, which took them from this scene of misery and disaster.

I never saw them again. Mr. Beaufort soon emerged from his little adventure, and was duly and regularly married at the Embassy, Brussels; for the Pierreponts were sensible enough to make the best of what was unavoidable, or at least incurable. He was to give up the stage and get a place, and, indeed, his late profession only lent a piquancy and flavour to his position. He was Claude Melnotte in a romantic way, without the actual associations of the stage. Claude Melnotte! Ah! that was a name of ill omen to another; a word to chill the heart and make it shrivel whenever mentioned. That departure from the hotel in shrouded darkness was but a symbol of her fate, for, though I often made inquiries,

and took pains to search them out, I never could learn anything certain as to their retreat, save that the young girl was 'delicate,' and that they had sought some sheltered and soothing spot. But she lived in but a frailly constructed tenement, which I could see, even at the time, was but a precarious one.

And so, within two years, I was grieved, though not surprised, to see in that grim compartment of the first column of the 'Times'—the 'outer sheet,' they call it—well, what will be guessed.

A Mediæval Mistake.

BY JAMES PAYN.

BUT few of my readers can, I conclude, remember the Young England days, when there was an attempt made to revive in this country some fine old mediæval customs. Certain high-souled individuals who shall be nameless—though some of them have made great names for themselves in the interim, under very unexpected and different circumstances—conceived that they had actually put their fingers upon that illusory date ‘the good old times,’ and would fain have galvanised them back to life.

They revived all usages thoroughly worn out,
The souls of them fumed forth the hearts of them torn out,

and even got up a tournament. A few old fellows still remember it, with poor Theodore Hook’s joke upon Sir Campbell of Saddel, who, more by good luck than good guidance of his adversary’s lance, was somehow ‘thrown out of his family seat.’ It was the ‘renaissance period,’ of yule logs and happy tenancies—whose bread, however, was not cheap—and it was hoped by certain noble enthusiasts that condescension and patronage would lose all unpleasantness, and indeed fail to be recognised, under the guise of a paternal feudalism.

It was a failure, of course; no one can ‘revive the mastodon’—a circumstance for which those who, like myself, find mere bulls sufficiently alarming, have reason to be grateful. But though the scheme fairly glittered with tinsel and gewgaws, and was much too gorgeously advertised, it was not all pinchbeck; or at all events some of those who believed in it had about them the ring of the true metal—albeit a little cracked.

Among the nobility, and in certain great houses in the country, hospitality was revived upon the most extensive scale, and in some cases so splendidly, that it made almost as great a hole in the estates of the family as though it had taken to mining. Oxen were roasted whole where formerly the guest only got his mutton cutlet, and instead of a kitchen range there was a bonfire.

Frank Selwyn, a young medical friend of mine at that time, used to speak in high terms of this Mediæval Revival, because he foresaw that one of its consequences, if generally carried out, would be a universal indigestion.

With plenty, however, it was held necessary for historical consistency to mix discomfort.

It was said that the Marquis of Millefleurs (who had the best Norman blood in Yorkshire) had discarded gas and even colza, and had his dining-room lit by men in steel with flambeaux; and that Lord de Bœuf slept on an ivory couch between the blankets and without night gear, because that was the mode in the Middle Ages.

Frank Selwyn, however, knew nothing of the doings of these great people, except by report. He was of good family, but they were not good enough to indulge in these eccentricities without the risk of being shut up as lunatics; and even if he had had a taste that way himself, he wanted his money for a very modern use indeed—namely, to buy a practice with in London. At six-and-twenty he purchased a partnership with old Dr. Dalrymple, of Brown Street, Park Lane, who attended some of the first folks in the land, and never took a fee from an untitled person without being fully persuaded that he could afford it. His notions were of the old school; he dosed and bled his noble patients till they were like ‘the ruined shells of hollow towers,’ and then he built them up again and filled them out with beef-steaks and port wine. He had, indeed, no fancy for this new fashion of old fashions—no doctor is a fanatic, it may be observed, in anything but medicine or surgery—but as some of his clients were addicted to it, he looked upon the weakness with a very charitable eye.

‘It is not enough nowadays to take things as we find them, my dear Selwyn,’ he would say good-humouredly, ‘but as we used to find them. If a patient thinks a fumigation of boiled hollyhock and fennel will do him good because his ancestor in King John’s time used it, let him be fumigated. Never cross a patient in little things. Lord Vavasour thinks there is nothing like gold for his system because Galen speaks of it as a fine old remedy. In a general way—that is, to the general practitioner—this might be dangerous, because, once in the system, gold remains there, and one must wait for the post-mortem to get it out again: but with our patients we always see our money back. Therefore, give them gold.’

Whatever Selwyn may have thought of Dr. Dalrymple professionally, he had no doubt of his wisdom as a man of the world, and was quite willing to profit by it. Moreover, his own conscience was not burdened by adopting these abnormal modes of treatment, since his practice lay among the middle class of patients—who were rarely bitten by this mania—while his principal kept the bigwigs for himself. But on one occasion Dr. Dalrymple fell a victim to the very malady which it was his chief office to cure in others—the gout. It was his own impression that he caught it of

some of his patients. He felt certain, living so moderately as he did, with only a glass or two of Madeira at luncheon, and one bottle of wholesome port, 'without a headache in a hogshead of it'—after dinner, that he couldn't have got it in any other way. Claret, indeed, he took with his meals in considerable quantities, and his feeding was rather extensive, considering that he never set foot on the ground save from his brougham to his client's door; but then he never touched beer (because he didn't like it); and what business has a man to get the gout who does not touch beer?

His reasoning was sound enough, no doubt; but still he got the gout, and in both feet. And while in that abject condition an express arrived from Lord de Bracy, of Donjon Towers, to request his immediate attendance. It was of course impossible that he could move, so he sent for Selwyn.

'My dear friend,' he said, 'you must be off into Kent at once: his lordship has the rheum.'

'The what?' inquired Selwyn.

'Oh, I forgot; you don't know his peculiarities. Lord de Bracy is about twenty-four generations behind his time. He ought to have been born—I mean, to have 'flourished' (that's the word)—in the thirteenth century. It is generally the young people who take up with these notions, but there is no fool like an old fool, and De Bracy has been bitten by them. You will find everything about him but his daughters—for they're young and charming—mædieval. And whatever you do, take care that you keep a grave face. You're a capital fellow, you know, but a little—shall I say skittish? At Donjon Towers skittishness would be fatal. If you make a joke down there, it must be in Latin; and not in good Latin either: it must be monkish.'

'And will Lord de Bracy really talk about his rheum, sir?' inquired Selwyn.

'Good Heavens! of course he will. You will surely be serious when prescribing for him. I take it for granted that professional feeling will enable you to withstand any temptation of that sort. He is the proudest man in England—the very proudest.'

'My dear Dr. Dalrymple, not a smile shall pass my lips,' said Selwyn confidently.

'Pass them? I hope not; nor ever reach them. I am afraid you are too young, my dear sir; I tremble for what may happen. Upon my life, if you were to laugh at him, I don't know to what lengths he might not go; he believes he has feudal rights, and may hang you. At all events, we should lose our best patient.'

'Indeed, sir,' pleaded Selwyn, 'you may rely on me. I will

be as cautious as though I were brushing flies off a sleeping Venus.'

'Heavens, what a simile!' murmured the doctor: 'he is certainly very young. However, we must take our chance.'

'I had better start at once, I suppose?' said the junior partner.

'Certainly; I have ordered the carriage and posters on. You are doing double work now, and have no time to lose. His lordship will give you a bed, of course; he is the very soul of hospitality. It is like a page out of "Ivanhoe" to dine with him. He will treat you with the utmost consideration, you may be sure of that. But you must return from the Towers the first thing in the morning.'

'You may depend upon that, sir: I shall be glad enough to get away, I'm sure.'

Dr. Dalrymple shook his head: that was not the frame of mind, he thought, in which a medical man should start upon a professional visit. Still, though Selwyn was young and impulsive, and much too 'natural,' not to say honest, for a fashionable physician, he knew he had plenty of common sense, and to that he trusted.

Within half an hour Dr. Selwyn (for he had got his diploma) was whirling down the Old Kent Road in a carriage and four.

The evening had not fallen when he came in sight of Donjon Towers. The edifice stood on a hill, and, being of great magnitude, could be seen as far off as Windsor Castle. The park, through which the private road led, seemed as though it would never end: and when he reached the last avenue of stately oaks, such was its length that it appeared to meet ahead of him, and bar his progress after all.

'This is tremendous,' thought Selwyn: 'but I much prefer the villa residences in the Regent's Park.'

The courtyard in front of the mansion could have accommodated the whole Household troops, and the stone steps that led to it were of an extent that suggested steppes in Siberia.

Two lackeys descended them as he drove up, and another stood at the top of them who received him with a profound obeisance. The former were draped in russet with linen girdles, the latter in broadcloth of curious cut, but it was not livery; in the hall a groom of the chambers at once took him up to his room; such, he said, being his master's orders when guests came off a journey. From this it seemed, since Selwyn had mentioned his errand, that his lordship's malady was not of a very pressing nature.

The apartment into which he was ushered would have contained his own little house in Bayswater, roof and all, but it lacked its

cheerfulness. The floor was of polished oak, and the walls were tapestried; the bed seemed several stories high, and had a canopy of black velvet. 'In such a bed, if one cannot sleep,' thought poor Selwyn, 'one could be very suitably interred.'

Having put on his dinner clothes, the groom of the chambers led him to his master's presence.

His lordship was in the library, and, as the doctor entered, rose, and advanced three steps to meet him. He was a tall pale man of aristocratic appearance, with snow-white hair and beard, but inclining to corpulence.

'I am sorry that Dr. Dalrymple is indisposed,' said he very civilly, but with great stateliness of manner: 'but I am nevertheless pleased to make the acquaintance of his substitute.'

Selwyn bowed his thanks, and at once inquired what ailed his lordship.

'The old malady,' answered Lord de Bracy solemnly, 'the rheum.'

'Umph—ha,' returned Selwyn, looking as wise as he could, and full of sympathy.

'It is accompanied this time,' continued his lordship, 'by ill humours in the head. I have tried tansy pudding, which is generally soverayne against it, but without effect.'

'Are you sure you have taken nothing to disturb the digestion, my lord: no unusual food, for example?'

'I had some peacock for lunch yesterday: but nothing—you may read it in Chaucer—is more wholesome: all my family eat peacock. On the other hand, I must confess that I had boiled veal for dinner.'

'I don't think that would have hurt you any *more* than the peacock,' said Selwyn gravely.

'It was however served with verjuice, a most capital sauce, and greatly admired by our ancestors—but my system seems to reject it.'

'I think it was very possibly the verjuice,' observed Selwyn.

'I have done all that the wisdom of our ancestors has recommended,' continued his lordship. 'I have had a hole made in my nightcap to carry off the ill humours, and have always lain on my left side. I have chewed mastic before going to rest, and I have resisted all temptation to sleep after a full meal, especially of porpoise.'

'Do you eat much porpoise?'

'No; I am sorry to say it is very difficult to obtain; the prejudices of modern days have almost prohibited it as an article of consumption. You have no personal objection to porpoise, I trust, Dr. Selwyn?'

‘Not the least, my lord. I approve of it myself no less than I do of peacock.’

‘I am delighted to find Dr. Dalrymple has so intelligent a partner; in country places, such as this, I find the most obstinate objections on the part of medical men to the most simple food, unless it happens to be of modern acceptance.’

‘Your appetite is tolerably good, my lord?’

‘Yes, indeed. You shall judge for yourself, however; there strikes the dinner hour. You shall give me your advice in the evening.’

A noise equal to a flourish of trumpets had been going on for some minutes, and there now entered a major domo with a long white wand, who ushered his master and his guest through two lines of serving men, into the banquet hall. Covers were laid but for two persons, which rather disappointed the young doctor. The Earl, he knew, was a widower, but he had hoped to meet some of his daughters, who had a great reputation for beauty.

The repast, however, was a sufficiently notable one to make up for the absence of company.

There were a great many servants, each with a towel round his neck as well as on his arm, and the dishes they brought in—which were enough for ten times the number of guests—were wonderful. There were no *plats* such as might have been expected at a nobleman’s table who kept a French cook; all was solid and huge. Pea-soup and frumenty were brought in in great silver tureens. Then lampreys with onions, a dish of which his lordship partook so plentifully as to remind his guest of a certain historical association with it, and also to suggest a very reasonable explanation of his ‘humours.’ There was a baron of beef, of course; and then a cygnet served with liver sauce. And here, the larger dishes having come to an end, a curious difference was made in the waiting. All the male servitors disappeared, and were succeeded by four neat-handed and pretty girls in a sort of white and blue uniform made of some old-fashioned material. The first delicacy they served Selwyn with was a beaver’s tail; and he almost fancied that the extreme caution he manifested in taking the first morsel induced one of them—the prettiest—to smile. Lord de Bracy ate of this very heartily, and washed it down with ypercas, a drink spiced (as Selwyn was afterwards informed) with cinnamon and heliotrope, but at all events with something very nasty. After this there was kid and ginger sauce, and a curlew with salt and sugar. And then came the ‘sutiltees,’ as they were termed: sweets (or ‘devices’), pretty substantial castles of pie-crust or *sweetmeats*,—to all which the noble host did such justice as to leave

A MÆDIEVAL MISTAKE.

gin of his maladies in no doubt. Then to the sideboard, with gold plate, the waiting-maids brought two silver basins full of rosewater, wherein their lord and the doctor dipped their hands, and dinner at last was over.

The effect of lampreys and beavers' tails when accompanied by ypericas in any quantity is somnolence, and Lord de Bracy seemed by no means inclined for conversation. So, after half an hour's 'bald disjointed chat,' Selwyn wrote out his prescription, and bade his noble host 'good-night' upon the plea that he had to start for town next morning at so early an hour. He did not sleep particularly well; he dreamt that he was being put to death by the Swanhoppers' Company—this was the cygnet and liver sauce, no doubt—for killing a curlew; and was glad enough to wake and find himself in a century when the laws are not so severe. It was quite a relief to him, too, to remember that his host would not be up to breakfast with him and see him off; for though he had been treated with the utmost hospitality, Lord de Bracy's society was on the whole oppressive, and he had by no means enjoyed his visit to Donjon Towers. It was an interesting experience, no doubt, but that is often a matter less pleasant in action than to talk about afterwards: he had had to act a part from first to last, to restrain all natural expressions of impatience or incredulity: and, in short, he was pining for fresh air.

He could but toy with the boar's head that was the *pièce de résistance* upon the sideboard, and declined with unhesitating frankness the cup of mead that was offered him by one of the serving-men. When his carriage was announced, he was following the groom of the chambers who had come up to his room for his portmanteau, when his attention was suddenly arrested by a pretty housemaid: it was the prettiest—the dark one—of the girls that had waited at table, and she had been doubtless watching outside his door, as servants will do in the best-conducted households, for a little present. Nay, in all probability, in Donjon Towers the old system of 'vails' was in full operation, and he felt (considering, too, how pretty she was) that he could hardly give her less than gold. He took, therefore, half-a-sovereign from his purse, and seeing her smile roguishly as he did so, and also that the groom was well out of sight, he accompanied the gift with a chuck under the chin. It was not right of him, of course; but the delight of getting away from that tremendous mansion (as he subsequently explained) no doubt put him in abnormally high spirits. At all events, he did it; and as she only blushed, and didn't say a word, he flattered himself that he had done rather a handsome thing in a pleasant fashion.

A MÆDIEVAL MISTAKE.

As to the whole visit, he felt indeed that he had acquitted himself, under very trying circumstances, exceedingly well, and had made a good impression.

He found Dr. Dalrymple not much improved in health, the fact being, as he confessed, that he had been in considerable anxiety as to the result of his young partner's visit to the Towers.

'Well, and how did it all go off?' was his first question.

'Oh, capitally; nothing could have been kinder than his lordship, but he's very heavy in hand.'

'Ah, you found out that!' returned the other, rubbing his hands. 'I have attended him these twenty years. Certainly one ought to be well paid, when one has to dine—eh—and listen to a patient out of the way of business. Well, and how is his rheum, as he calls it?'

'Well, I'd much sooner have his rheum than his company,' said Selwyn, laughing. 'The fact is, there is nothing at all the matter with him but over-eating. And such things too, porpoises and peacocks!'

'Ah, I've eaten porpoise at the Towers,' sighed the old Doctor, with the air of one who recalls a self-sacrifice.

'I dare say it is no worse than a beaver's tail,' protested Selwyn. 'However, it was a very interesting dinner. After the big things had been disposed of, the serving-men retired, and——'

'And then the girls came in!' interrupted the old Doctor excitedly. 'That always happens when you dine at the Towers for the first time. It's his lordship's notion of doing the honours of hospitality—borrowed from the time of Edward the Confessor, I believe. The ladies of the family wait on the guest.'

'The ladies of the family!' reiterated Selwyn, aghast with horror. 'Do you mean to say those four girls in blue and white were Lord de Bracy's daughters?'

'Of course they were: did you think they were housemaids?'

Selwyn answered nothing: though he was quite certain he had taken at least one of them for such.

'Well, I wonder you did not see they had an aristocratic air. Perhaps I ought to have told you how it would be, beforehand. However, De Bracy will like you all the better for taking the thing as a matter of course: some men will jump up and hand the dishes themselves, because it distresses them to be waited on in that way: but it is better to fall in with the host's fancy.'

'Do you remember,' gasped poor Selwyn, 'what was the name of the darkest of the young ladies?'

'Of course I do: you've a sharp eye, you young dog! she's the youngest, and the beauty—Lady Ermengarde; they tell me that,

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A MEDIÆVAL MISTAKE.

It being mediæval, she is full of fun. I hope because she's a *leetle* above you, my dear Selwyn. Good in all England.' Less Frank had given her half-a-sovereign, and under the chin. As he was in expectation of some terrible vengeance against him at the hands of reckless minions of Feudalism, as it happened, nothing was done. It would have been an immense relief to his mind to have known that Lady Ermengarde Plantagenet had some humour (not of the sort for which her noble father took tansy pudding), and that she had taken his mistake in excellent part. She was accustomed to wear for years upon her châtelaine, in company with many less useful articles, a certain half-sovereign with a hole through it, the history of which she would never reveal. It was a present, she said, from a young gentleman. But, though Lord de Bracy had the rheum again and again (he eventually died of it), and sent for Dr. Dalrymple many times, always with the polite proviso that, if it should be inconvenient for the Doctor, his junior partner would be equally acceptable, Frank Selwyn never again set foot in Donjon Towers.

Sir Dinadan's Death.

WHEN leaves lie under the chestnut tree,
 And acorns under the oak,
 When thickets ring to bucks belling
 And crossing antlers' stroke,
 The hunters feast and the raven's fee
 Stilleth the hungry croak.

The raven perched on the blasted tree,
 And ever the raven cried ;
 The hunter watched by wood and lea,
 And loosened the knife by his side ;
 While all in greenwood, carelessly,
 Strayed Dinadan with his bride.

Full little he recked of the careless jape
 That turned their blood to gall,
 Who longed for his as for juice of grape,
 Nor felt the chilly pall
 The evening spread, nor marked that shape
 Slip under the elms so tall.

For he, who never had breathed a word
 Of love to lady yet,
 Was caught at last, and the Table stirred,
 With laughter and light regret,
 That mirth of the feast and the swing of the sword
 Their mate should awhile forget.

There were three brothers of evil mood,
 Though come of a kingly strain,
 Gaheris lacked them, and Gareth good,
 But Mordred and Agrawaine
 Hated who ever for Lancelot stood,
 And they won the light Gawaine.

But ever Gawaine was a gentle knight :
 Quoth he, ' It were full ill
 That one unarmed to death were dight,
 And so our fame must spill ;
 Then match we Dinadan in fair fight,—
 What harm, though two he kill ? '

SIR DINADAN'S DEATH.

Then Mordred spoke, with his viper eyes,
And Agrawaine thereto,
' Good sooth, fair brother, ladies' sighs
Have loosed thine every thew !
Thy very heart seeks, womanwise,
As haggard to its mew !

' But knowest how at vesper-hour,
In forest-paths hard by,
He meets his dame in secret bower,
That none their sport espy ?
And what more meet for swordsman's dower
Than in her sight to die !

' Whilst one of us shall soothe the bride ! '—
Gawaine he swore and passed,
E'en Agrawaine his brow must hide,
But Mordred laughed, and last,
' Alone I wait this lover,' he cried,
' My heart ne'er stood aghast ! '

Sir Dinadan jested, Sir Dinadan sang,
As they went by the alleys green,
And Camelot bells far off they rang
The greeting of heaven's queen,
The while on his arm his love did hang,
And neither recked of teen.

Nor recked of that low-crouching form,
His dagger, or aught of ill ;
The greatest hush is before the storm,
And who should seek to spill
Their cup of joy ? Could life so warm
Know aught of deathly chill ?

A spring, and a stab, and a gasping groan,
And a six-foot fall on ground,
A body that lies on the moss alone,
Another with false arms wound
About her waist for a bridal zone,—
God help her in that stound !

Now God thee rest, Sir Dinadan,
That wast full leal and true,
And therewithal the merriest man
That Arthur's court e'er knew,
And kindest ;—and high Heaven ban
Who made thy lady rue !



'GOD HELP HER IN THAT STOUND!

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The Brave Girl of Glenbarr.

BY CUTHBERT BEDE.

CHAPTER I.

OLD DONALD'S DECISION.

'If Mary Morrison will wed wi' me, I'll wed no other!' This was young Donald's decision. And the handsome, stalwart young Highlander looked as though he intended to carry into effect those few words that he had spoken to his father in Gaelic.

Donald Macbane was his father's only child; and, as his mother had died within a few days of his birth, he had never known any other parent than his stern father. A hard man was the elder Donald, ruling those about him with an iron will, and intent only upon improving his small farm to its utmost capability, so that he might leave it to his son as a goodly heritage. By its aid, young Donald might, in time, be so raised above the humble surroundings of his father's early days, that he might almost pass as a laird. But that this scheme might be fully carried out, it was needful that his son should be married to a girl who had money or land of her own, and who would not come to him empty-handed and without a dowry. A 'tocherless lass' was not to be thought of; and the future owner of the small farm on the hillside in the Barr Glen must be mated with a maiden who was similarly circumstanced as regarded property.

And such a girl was to be found within a mile or two. For, on the opposite side of the glen, on the other side of the Barr river, where it tripped down its rocky staircase to join the great Atlantic, there lived a girl, named Janet Baillie, who was the only survivor of the once large family of old Hugh Baillie, and who would inherit his farmstead, which was a place called Clachanaigs, and was about as large as old Donald Macbane's farm at Glenbarr. The two families had always been intimate and on good terms; and Janet had ever a sweet smile and a pleasant word for young Donald whenever they met, whether it were at home, or at kirk or market; and there seemed to old Donald no possible reason why these two young people should not make a match of it. There was no discrepancy either in years or position; and there was no obstacle in their way; for Donald Macbane had sounded Hugh Baillie on the subject, and found the old man quite agreeable to the match. They

were 'a fine stand-up couple,' as old Donald often told himself; and there could not be a more appropriate proceeding than to marry them to each other, and look forward to the time when the two farmsteads of Glenbarr and Clachanaigs should belong to one proprietor. Old Donald had dwelt so much on the idea, that he considered it as good as settled. He was so much accustomed to have his own will carried out, that he did not anticipate the disagreeable novelty of any opposition coming from his son; especially when so favourable an arrangement was made for him, and such a nice girl as Janet Baillie was (as he supposed) ready to make him her husband. And now, to his surprise, when he had spoken to his son on the subject, and had suggested to him that he might go to Janet, and ask her to name the day for the wedding, young Donald had replied to him with those astounding words: 'If Mary Morrison will wed wi' me, I'll wed no other!'

Now, this Mary Morrison was the girl who lived at the farm, and whose daily work was about the house and its surroundings; and all her earthly riches were the wages that old Donald paid her. Therefore, it was an utterly upsetting notion to him, that his son should ruin his prospects by throwing himself away on a mere farm-servant, when he might have the heiress of Clachanaigs for the asking. The old man could not understand it; he could not comprehend that his son and heir should take up, as he phrased it, with a girl who was not worth a single soum—a soum being an extent of hill-pasture that would be sufficient to keep a cow or ten sheep. He could not imagine how such a thing could be. And yet, he had to confess to himself that such a thing would have to be; for he knew that his son followed his father in having a determined will of his own; and that when he had made that resolution regarding Mary Morrison, he would most assuredly abide by it, and carry it into effect. Yes, it would have to be, and all his dearly loved plans would be thwarted, unless he could devise some scheme to get the girl out of the way.

He had much talk with his son on the subject; he pleaded the cause of Janet Baillie, and sang the praises of Clachanaigs; but he found, as he had expected, that all his talk and all his pleadings led to no further result than making young Donald the more resolved in his intention to wed no other than Mary Morrison. 'We are plighted to each other,' he said in Gaelic; 'and we are only waiting till next May, when her time of service will be over. We shall then be married; and, if you do not like us to live here and help you on the farm, we shall turn our backs on Glenbarr, and go away to a home of our own. We are strong and healthy, and we love one another; and, please God, we can earn our liveli-

hood quite as well together as if we were apart. I have nothing to say against Janet Baillie. She is a good girl, and I hope will get a good man for her husband; but she is not Mary Morrison.' Then old Donald said no more; but he hardened his heart against his servant, and he was determined, by fair means or foul, to prevent her from marrying his son. There was at least six months for him wherein to plot and plan, and something might occur, in that interval, to favour his wishes. Until next May, Mary Morrison would be his servant, and she could not leave her situation without his consent.

The long evenings of winter had now come on, and the year was hastening to its close. The range of hills that stretched their length to Beinn-an-Tuire were covered with snow, and it lay deeply down in the hollows of the glen. In the last week of the year the younger Donald had left Glenbarr to go to a great cattle fair that was to be held in the northern part of the county, which fair lasted over the two last days of the old year and the first day of the new year, which day went by the name of Hogmanay, and was celebrated with much rejoicing and many old-world customs, including those of the 'first foot,' the wassail bowl, and the guizards. Donald's attendance at this Hogmanay Fair necessitated his absence from Glenbarr during several days, and was one of the few important events of the twelve months that made a change in the ordinary monotony of their every-day life. He had said good-bye to Mary, promising to bring her a Hogmanay fairing, and hoping that his next gift to her would take the form of a plain gold ring.

On the last evening of the old year, old Donald was sitting by the peat-fire on the hearth, in front of which Luath, his faithful collie, had stretched himself in luxurious ease. On the other side, seated on a low stool, was Mary Morrison, busily engaged in knitting. The wind was howling outside, and the drifting snow was clogging the doorways. Old Donald broke the silence that had been long reigning between them by making some remarks about his son's absence at the cattle fair—a theme which had its full interest for his servant. They spoke in Gaelic: for the English language was but little used by the natives, except when they went to a market town, and even there many people could be met with who had 'got no English.'

'My son seems bent upon making you his wife,' at length said old Donald; 'but I don't like to give my consent, unless I am quite sure that he is going to be married to a brave girl.'

'But,' pleaded Mary, 'I think that I am a brave girl, Mr. Macbane.'

‘If you think so,’ said the old man, ‘are you ready to prove it by your actions?’

‘If it is anything that a girl may do, Mr. Macbane, I am ready to do it for the love that I bear to your son.’

‘It is nothing more than to walk to the old church at Saddell.’ Old Donald referred to the ruins of Saddell Monastery.

‘Oh, I can easily do that, Mr. Macbane. You know that I have often walked there, in the summer or spring. It is not more than six miles as the crow flies.’

‘Yes; but the road is a bad one, and is made longer by the high hills and the deep glens. And there is snow on the ground.’

‘But it may be clear to-morrow, or the next day.’

‘If you want to win my son by proving yourself to be a brave girl, you must not wait for a fair-weather walk that could be taken by Janet Baillie, or any other girl in the glen; but you must do something out of the common way.’

‘I am ready to do it for Donald’s sake. Whatever Janet Baillie may do, I will try to do more.’

‘I shall require you to go to the old church at Saddell this very night, and to be back here by breakfast time in the morning.’

‘I think Janet Baillie would not do that! but I will do it, or try to do it; though it is a wild night for such a walk and to such a place.’

‘That is not all,’ said the stern old man, though his voice trembled somewhat, as he made known to her his resolve. ‘I must have full and certain evidence that you have been to the old church; and though I never knew you to tell me a falsehood, yet, in this case, I must have further proof than your mere word. There is an old tomb inside the church: it is at the farther end from the door, on the right-hand side, and stands under an arch. It is the great Macdonald’s tomb; and on it there is a skull—the skull, they say, of a murderer.’

‘Yes! I have seen it,’ she said, with a shudder.

‘Are you brave enough to make your way alone, and through the snow, to that church, this very night; and, in proof that you have been there, to bring me back from thence the skull?’

‘And what if I do so?’

‘In that case I will withdraw my opposition to your marriage with my son; and I will not only give my free consent, but I will also make over to him the half of all that I have, so that he may marry you in comfort, and before May-day, if he chooses to do so.’

‘That will be grand news for him when he comes home from the fair.’

‘Yes! if you have performed your part of the bargain; but it will take a brave girl to do what I have set you.’

‘And am not I a brave girl, Mr. Macbane?’

‘That will depend upon your own showing. I shall certainly consider you to be very brave, and deserving of my son, if you will do as I propose, and go to Saddell Church this night, and show me, by breakfast time to-morrow, the skull that you have brought from there. In that case, your bravery shall have its reward.’

‘Then I will do it! at least, I will try my best; for I know that I bring Donald no dowry, except a pair of willing hands and a loving heart; and I should be loth to wed him without his father’s blessing. So I will do your bidding, Mr. Macbane, though it is a wild, fearsome night to go on such a strange errand.’

Mary Morrison put aside her knitting, wrapped a plaid about her head and shoulders, and, with a silent prayer for safe guidance on her perilous path, went out into the wild winter’s night. Luath, the collie, would have gone with her, and she would have been deeply thankful for his company and protection; but old Donald called him back into the house, and barred the door. Then the stern man listened to the howling of the wind, and thought: ‘She will not return. On a night like this the way is too perilous for safety, and one false step may send her to her death. If it is a wrong deed of mine, it was wrong of her to win my boy’s love. If I do evil, I do it that good may come. Once rid of her daily presence, Donald will forget his fancy for her; and my darling wish of marrying him to Janet Baillie may be carried out.’

But although he tried to reconcile his conduct to his conscience, he could not do so. As he sat over the fire, and placed more peats upon it, he endeavoured to lull to rest his unquiet fancies with such specious arguments as these: She has gone of her own free will. She might have stayed here, if she chose. She is well acquainted with the road, and she can turn back if the storm is too strong, or the snow too deep for her. If she persists in going on, and comes to any harm, it will be through her own folly. It is a madcap adventure; but it is her own doing—not mine—no, not mine.

Yet old Donald, notwithstanding these arguments and special pleadings, could not lay that ghost of terror that was beginning to alarm him; and as he lay on the upper shelf of the wooden cupboard that is known as a box-bed, and huddled the bed-clothes around him, he could not shut out the visions that took possession of his mind and drove away sleep. The wind whistled shrilly *through the ill-fitting door*, and whirled sparks from the *slumber-*

ing peats on the hearth; their flickering light came and went on the platters and jugs that were ranged on the old dresser, and which Mary Morrison always set out so well, and tended so carefully; and the old oaken kist and ambry, and the other scanty furniture of the dwelling-room, gleamed in the uncertain light. The snow could be seen clogging the small window-panes, and whirling down the hole in the heather-thatched roof that did duty for a chimney. As it fell spluttering in the peat ashes, Luath, the collie, who had been uneasy for some time past, lifted up his head and howled: a howl that was long and piercing. In vain did stern old Donald, from the recesses of his box-bed, tell Luath to whisht, and called him a 'camstary bree-yute!' in vain did he add stronger expletives in Gaelic; Luath howled on; and old Donald, restless and wakeful, ill at ease both in mind and body, told himself that Luath's howling boded no good. What would he now give, were it the New Year's morning, and the brave girl safe at home again at Glenbarr!

CHAPTER II.

A DARING DEED.

ALTHOUGH Mary Morrison well knew the way that led over the hills from Glenbarr to Saddell, yet it was difficult to find it on that wild night. It was not dark, however, for the snow that was lying all around her made a kind of misty moonlight; and the hills and glens were dimly visible for some distance. This helped her to note certain familiar landmarks, and to keep her in the right path.

'May the good God protect me,' she murmured, in her simple piety, 'and bring me safe back with what the master has bidden me fetch.' She shrank so much from the thought of that murderer's skull, that she could not even name it to herself. But she confided herself to God's care, and pressed bravely on her way, blown by the wind, and trudging heavily through the deep snow, but upborne by the thought that she was doing this to win her lover.

Of course she was a firm believer in the 'little folk;' but she had no fear of them, for all their deeds were of kindness to those who were themselves kind; and they helped those who did their duty simply and bravely, as she was now doing, upborne by a true maiden's love. But neither green-coated fairy nor frolicsome brownie crossed her path; nor did any fearsome gruagach, or creature, waylay her on her lonely road. Not a soul did she see,

nor at that time of night did she expect to see. Here and there a few kyloes, huddled together under any slight shelter that offered itself, looked up at her with their mild wondering eyes, as though in astonishment at her apparition. There were black-faced sheep, too, whose wool looked dark brown against the pure snow, who tossed their twisted horns as she plodded past them. If the faithful Luath had been permitted to accompany her, she would not have felt so utterly desolate as she did now, on this last night of the old year.

The range of hills over which she had to pass formed the backbone of the long peninsula of Cantire, and was upwards of a thousand feet above the level of the Atlantic, the hoarse thunder of whose mighty rollers she could hear even amid the wild gusts of the storm. She had to cross over the southern side of Beinn-an-Tuirc, the Wild Boar's Mountain, in the forests of which, according to her country's legend, Diarmid, the Fingalian Achilles, slew the terrible wild boar that was the scourge of the district, and met his own death when one of the boar's bristles pricked his heel. The mountain rose to the left of her path, but its summit of 2170 feet was now concealed by the drifting snow and misty vapours. Here she had to cross the river Barr, near to its source in the lonely Loch Arnicle. A slight stone bridge spanned the stream, with a low parapet on either side, barely high enough in the snow to prevent her from making a false step into the stream below. The river was now in spate; and it rushed and roared, and flung itself among the rough boulders in a torrent of peat-stained water, its furious headlong dash and boiling spray contrasting strangely with the stillness of the dark tarn, from the tall reeds of which the herons and wild geese and wild swans would take their clanging flight.

Amid the banks of snow-covered heather were many morasses, with their tumps of rushes and bog-cotton, to whose white feathery down Ossian likened the snowy breasts of 'the high-bosomed Strina Dona.' No less fair than Strina Dona herself was the brave and bonnie Mary Morrison, as she gallantly faced the storm of wind and snow, and carefully picked her way amid the lichened rocks and bracken. And if not less fair than Strina Dona, no less daring and devoted was she than the beauteous Grainia, beloved of Diarmid, who risked her life to bring him aid in his last extremity, the while she courageously hid the wandering arrow that had pierced her fair breast, and died with him here upon this mountain, Beinn-an-Tuirc, while the onlookers with glistening eyes murmured, 'The fondest lovers must part at last.' Brave as the beauteous and devoted Grainia, Mary Morrison hoped that she had only

parted with her own fond lover for a few hours, and that this night's work would bring them many days of happiness.

On she went, and never faltered or paused, save but for a few moments to enable her to regain her spent breath, or to note the bearings of her path. Here and there, a noble Scotch fir, whose ruddy-brown trunk was planted firmly in the cleft of a crag, raised on high its twisted arms for the table of snow that had bespread its massive dark foliage. These firs, and the groups of graceful birch and larch, and the scattered rowan-trees, served her as landmarks in the snowy landscape. By carefully noting them and their bearings, she paced steadily on to her destination down into the solemn depths of the deep glen—leaping over the burnie rushing seawards, climbing the steep brae, and then away over another rolling hill, again to encounter a similar repetition of hill and glen. Yet she held on her way, and never missed it beyond a few yards, her set purpose and her deep love upbearing her through the perils and trials of this wild last night of the old year, and enabling her to brave the dangers of the solitary road. It was not the first fierce storm of wind and snow in which she had wandered abroad, sometimes to herd the straggling sheep, and sometimes to fetch up the kyloes, or to bring the milking cows to the byre. But now she had a higher motive to sustain her, and to nerve her for the task that she had undertaken; and with her plaid wrapped tightly over her head and shoulders, she pressed dauntlessly on through the bleak weather, the very picture of a brave Highland maiden.

Though the snow whirled in her face so as to wellnigh blind her, and though it clogged her feet and muffled her path, she struggled on to her destination, and at length, to her great joy, found herself descending into Saddell Glen, and heard the dash of its river. She entered the plantation of ash and elm trees, and soon after stood among the memorial stones that were thickly scattered in the graveyard round the ruins of what was once a grand old monastery. Now it was fallen from its former high estate, and was a deserted ruin, used only occasionally for the purposes of burial. Many a gallant Macdonald and Lord of the Isles lay around her; yet there was not one of those heroes of old who had been called upon to perform a deed demanding greater courage and endurance than that which now taxed the powers of the brave girl of Glenbarr. Reginald, the son of the mighty Somerled, who had built this monastery for the Cistercian monks, and was here buried in the year 1163, had adopted the Scandinavian custom; and for the space of three years had lived without entering a house wherein a fire had been kindled, in order that he might accustom himself to privation and hardship. Yet any hard-

ship that he had undergone in his wild and stormy career, as Thane of Argyle, and Lord of Cantire and the Isles, would hardly have surpassed that which Mary Morrison was now voluntarily undergoing for true love's sake.

This building at Saddell, which she had at length reached, was now a complete ruin. Its stones, erected on consecrated dust that had been brought from Rome, had been barbarously dealt with, and a large number of them had been carted away by a proprietor, to build dykes and offices, which he paved with tombstones of abbots and warriors. Mary Morrison well knew the local legend, how that this man had been punished for his sacrilege by soon after meeting his death by a trivial accident; and that the estate had then passed to another family. Yet at the time of her visit a certain portion of the building, commonly called 'the old church,' or kirk, still remained standing, and was cared for after a certain fashion, for its outer walls still stood intact, and at the western end there was an oaken door to shut out intruders. The snow and the rain could not be shut out, for the greater portion of the roof had fallen, and the building was, in consequence, open to the sky. Ornate sculpture still remained on the walls and on some tombs, especially on one, a memorial of some Lord of the Isles, probably of Reginald himself, the founder of the church. It was recessed in the south wall towards the east end, and was covered with a pointed arch. On the top of the slab of this tomb was laid a human skull, which was protected by the covering arch from any downpour of rain or fall of snow. This was the skull that the brave girl had pledged her word to take from its resting-place, and carry back to her stern old master at Glenbarr.

It may merely have been an ordinary skull, turned up by the sexton when digging a fresh grave, and not replaced by him in the soil, but removed by someone to the slab of the founder's tomb. The skull, however, was invested with its own particular legend in that land of legends. It was said to be the skull of the grim Macdonald, surnamed Rìgh Fiongal, who, besides murdering at the rate of one daily the chieftains of the clan M'Lean, who had come to Saddell to make peace with him, had also murdered by slow starvation in the dungeons of his castle the husband of a woman whom he had seized and borne off from Ireland; and it was said that when he pointed out to her, from the summit of the castle's square massive tower, the body of her husband being carried out for burial, she suddenly leaped from the battlements, and fell dead by the side of the corpse. The legend went that, when this cruel Macdonald died, the dogs scratched up his body from the grave, and devoured the flesh, even as that wretched man, whom he had

starved to death in his dungeon, had been found to have gnawed his own hand and arm in his agony to prolong life. The bones of this once dreaded and powerful Lord of the Isles were discovered clean picked by the logs and carrion crows; but no one could be found to give them a fresh burial in the graveyard, and the skull was placed, in a sort of mockery, on the slab of his great ancestor's tomb. It was looked upon with superstitious awe, and no one dared to touch or meddle with it.

This, then, was the grim memorial of a wicked murderer that Mary Morrison had pledged herself to take from its place, in the dead of that wild winter's night, and to carry it back on her perilous journey all the way to Glenbarr. She had often seen the skull, and well knew the legend that belonged to it; and she had never dared to lay a finger upon it. But now she had to nerve herself to do this, and to carry the ghastly burden for many miles. 'It is for Donald!' she murmured; 'may the good God protect and help me!' And she approached the building through the graveyard crowded with its memorials to the departed.

When she had reached the enclosed portion of the old monastery, she found that its door, which was ordinarily closed, was standing ajar, burst open probably by the violence of the storm. She crossed the threshold deep in snow. Although the greater portion of the roof had fallen in, and the building, for the most part, was open to the sky, yet the place was very dark; the tall trees that grew so closely to the building, and in such profusion, making a deep shade there, even at noonday. But she knew the exact spot where she should find the skull, and she began to grope her way to it in the dark. As she did so she heard a peculiar noise, made up, as it seemed to her, of low moans from many creatures. The sighing of the wind through the trees did not account for these sounds; though it made it impossible for her to listen attentively to them, or to conjecture what they could be, but they appeared to proceed from something within the walls of the old church. Then there was a trampling of light feet over the broken pavement, and she was conscious that certain forms were rushing past her in the darkness. Then there was a momentary cessation of the peculiar sounds; then they were succeeded by the mysterious plaintive moanings.

'I felt my heart give a great jump into my throat!' she afterwards said; 'but I was not going to have my walk for nothing, so I made for the skull.'

She did not tell of the effort that it cost her, terrified though not disheartened, to grope to the Macdonald's tomb, and then to stretch out her hand, until she felt them

touch the murderer's skull. She did not say how she kept her purpose bravely and steadily in view; and though she loathed to feel the clammy remains of the wicked man, whose skull had grinned there so ghastlily for so many years, and had rarely been touched by any finger, how she seized the skull with both hands, and, though she felt its teeth rattling in their sockets, turned back hastily to make good her escape from the old church. As she did so the trampling of feet and the moans continued; and she felt that the mysterious forms were pursuing her. Grasping the skull, she safely gained the door, and pulled it to after her. As she did so she heard a rush against it from the inner side, but without looking behind her she turned her back upon the building, and fled through the graveyard and up the glen.

It was past midnight now; the old year was dead, and was laid to rest under its winding-sheet of snow; and the new year had entered upon its stormy life. She too, this brave girl of Glenbarr, was passing from her old life of dependence and servitude, and was about to enter, it may be, upon a new life of married happiness, if only she could successfully accomplish the hard task that her stern old master had set her. The long weary way back to Glenbarr had now to be retraced. Happily, the feathery snow had not fallen so fast or so deep as to quite obliterate the track of her foot-marks; and these somewhat helped her to keep to the right path. She had also turned her back upon the wind, and could see more clearly before her, and although, if she had followed the dictates of her nature, she would have willingly flung the skull into one of the roaring torrents that she was compelled to cross, she bore it bravely on as the guerdon of her victory, the visible token that she had fulfilled the vow that she had made for love.

The wild storm through which she had battled was now beginning to abate, and as she struggled on, weary in body but light of heart, the morning began to dawn, and mighty Beinn-an-Tuirc lifted his huge shoulders through the floating snowy vapours. The dense mist was drifting over the dark waters of Loch Arnicle in ghostly shrouds, and she saw a golden eagle poised over Lochnaralach, while the storm that had swept over the hills towards Glenacardoch sobbed itself to rest on the bosom of the Atlantic. As she wearily descended the last hill towards Glenbarr, the light was broadening in the early morning of New Year's Day; the islands of Cara and Gigha, with their snow coverings, looked like jewels amid the dark waves, and beyond them Jura's Paps were faintly seen against the dull grey sky.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW YEAR'S GREETING.

OLD Donald was at his door anxiously looking out in the direction of Saddell. During those long hours, while Mary Morrison had been away, and while the old year was passing into the new, he had tossed to and fro, but could not sleep. Nor could Luath, for he had gone restlessly backwards and forwards, from the hearth to the door, and had whined and howled through every one of those weary, anxious hours. His master had ceased his endeavours to keep the dog quiet; the collie's feelings were in harmony with his own. If only Mary Morrison would return, thought old Donald, skull or no skull, he would forgive all, and would allow her and his son to go their own ways. Up to now, he had not realised the gravity of his proceedings; he was not a bad man, rather was he a just man, though very stern and self-willed, but he had formed other views for his only son than that he should marry a farm-servant, however brave and bonnie she might be. But in those silent watches of the night, when the year had slipped away in death, even as his own years of life were now drawing to their natural close, it had been revealed to him how very near he had become to a murderer, in intention if not in fact; and that, in sending Mary Morrison for the murderer's skull, he was dismissing her to a deed that might bring upon himself a punishment righteously deserving the Macdonald's doom. That night's solitary meditation and anxiety had wrought a good work for old Donald Macbane.

But it was Luath, the faithful Luath, who had first discerned the brave girl, ere yet her old master, with his dimmed sight, could view her coming down the snowy hillside, with her plaid wrapped tightly about her. Luath had seen her, and with a joyful bark of recognition, and despite the whistling (and something worse) of old Donald, had dashed forwards into the dim light of the early morning, and with his beautiful silky coat flying in the breeze, and his intelligent head erect, was bounding rapidly on until he had soon covered the ground between himself and Mary Morrison, and had placed his paws lovingly upon her shoulders. There was only one doubtful moment in his affectionate reception of her. He sniffed a ghastly something that she carried under her plaid, and he was suspicious and uneasy in his mind. Nevertheless, by the time that they had reached old Donald's home he had recovered his gaiety of spirits, and was bounding round Mary in a way that betokened *effusiveness* of delight.

In his own secret heart old Donald was not less pleased to see her—she was alive and well, that was patent to the eye; she was wearied, no doubt, but that could soon be remedied. Had she, however, fulfilled her mission? if not, he had a loop-hole of escape, should he desire to make use of such a subterfuge when a few days' calm reflection had enabled him to shake off the gloomy terrors of the past night, and to forbid the marriage of his son to any other maiden than the heiress Janet Baillie. It was, therefore, with an outward demonstration of manner very different from his real inward feeling that he calmly accosted his servant when she came up to him outside his door, amidst the boisterous demonstrations of the faithful collie. 'So you have come back, my lass—down, Luath, you camstary fool!'

'Yes, I am back again, master.'

'And have ye walked all the way to Saddell old church—all the way there and back?'

'Yes, master, all the way there and back.'

'Ye must have had a bad night of it?'

'A very bad night of it.'

'And—ye got to the old church?'

'Yes, master; I got to the old church.'

'And did ye find the murderer's skull on the great Macdonald's tomb?'

'Yes, I found it.'

'And of course ye've brought it back wi' ye, agreeable to your promise?'

'Yes, I have brought it, and of course, master, you'll be agreeable to your promise?' and from underneath the folds of the plaid she brought out the skull.

Old Donald was somewhat taken aback by the sudden sight of it. He had the superstitious fears of his neighbours, and he shrank from looking upon that grinning relic, much less from contaminating himself by laying so much as a finger upon it. 'Take it away,' he cried; 'take the horrid thing away! I was never too fond of dead men's bones.'

She folded it again in the end of her plaid, and, as they passed into the house, she dropped wearily upon a seat, spent out by her long night of fatigue and excitement. Old Donald had a passing gleam of kindness and sympathy for the maiden, and said to her: 'This is Hogmanay morning, my lass, and you're the first foot in the house. It's a pity that you brought nothing better with you than that—that thing that I sent you to Saddell for. But it was all my doing your going there, and you've brought what I sent you for: so I ought to take your New Year's gift and be pleased with

it. And you must have been wearied with the getting of it, and you must be almost worn out, my lass, with your long walk; and you'd better taste a drop of whisky.' Old Donald Macbane must have been in a charitable mood thus to offer a sup of his precious whisky to his servant girl; but Mary refused it, and going to the peat fire, over which a large iron pot, suspended by a great chain, was kept in a state of perpetual simmer, she returned, as it were, to the ordinary duties of her daily life, and made herself a bowl of porridge, with which, and a bannock cake, she refreshed herself after her late fatigue. The intelligent Luath looked on with the greatest delight, and kept her company during this New Year's morning's breakfast. Then, when she had finished her meal, and changed her wet clothes for dry ones, she took a couple of hours' sound sleep, and then awoke refreshed, and went about her ordinary household duties.

Meanwhile old Donald had been out of doors seeing to his own work with the beasts, and about the farm buildings, and when he returned to the house his habitual cautiousness seemed to have returned with him. 'You had the skull, Mary?' he asked.

'Yes, master. I have put it aside, in a safe place; but I can bring it to you.'

'I don't want to see it again. But you're sure it's the same skull, Mary? I'm thinking that it might be one from elsewhere.'

'It's the one that you bid me to fetch you, Mr. Macbane, and it's from the Macdonald's tomb in the old church at Saddell. I took it from under the arch, and I carried it all the way here.' And then she told him the circumstances under which she had obtained it, and the mysterious sounds that she had heard in the old church.

'It's a strange tale,' said old Donald. 'I'm doubting the facts, Mary.'

'If ye'll go there,' she replied, 'ye'll find all the facts, Mr. Macbane.'

Then he said, 'I'll take ye at your word, Mary; it's broad daylight now, and the storm is blown over. I thought that Jock MacPhail'—this was his farming man—'might have been keeping Hogmanay; but he's come to his work, and I'll go away to Saddell, and he shall go with me, for an eyewitness of the facts. And we'll prove your words, Mary Morrison; and we shall see if there are your tracks in the snow right up to the old church; and I'm thinking, my lass, that as likely as not we shall find the true murderer's skull on the great Macdonald's tomb.'

'I took the skull from there, Mr. Macbane; and it's all true that I've told you.'

'Ay, ay, we'll see, Mary; we'll see!' said old Donald. And soon after she saw him, in company with Jock MacPhail, plodding up the hillside, and taking that snowy path to Saddell along which she had so bravely laboured during the long hours of the preceding night.

It was afternoon on that New Year's Day before old Donald returned to Glenbarr, for, vigorous though he was, yet the elasticity of youth was past, and he had been compelled to rest several times by the way. Not only did his man Jock MacPhail return with him, but his son Donald also, greatly to Mary's surprise. Her lover soon explained it to her: 'I met them, quite accidentally, between here and Saddell. I learnt what they were after, and I went with them to see fair play.'

'But, Donald,' she said, 'you are back from the fair a day earlier than you expected?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'I sold the beasts, and I did all the business that I wanted. And besides—I had a dream, a bad dream; it was about you, Mary. I thought you had gone down into some dreadful charnel-house, though you were not dead; and I was disturbed that greatly that nothing would pacify me but to hasten back to Glenbarr, and know that you were safe, and that my evil dream was an empty vision.'

And then, between those soft nothings that lovers delight in after an absence however brief—and this parting had, for them, been a long one—she told him how very near his dream had been of coming true; and that she, during the night, had been really among the graves and relics of the dead.

Yes, he knew all about it. That casual meeting with his father, so unexpectedly, had led to the needful explanation, and he had retraced his steps with them to the old ruined monastery at Saddell, to be a witness, on his true love's behalf, to what they saw there. 'And,' continued young Donald, 'when we got to the old church, and found the door shut, just as you had left it, and burst it open, what do you suppose we found there?'

'Not ghosts?' she faltered.

'Well,' replied young Donald dubiously, 'certainly they may have been called something else than ghosts, for they had hoofs, and not a few of them had horns. Yet, they were not uncanny creatures for all that. They were deer, a number of wild deer, who had evidently pushed their way into the old church to seek shelter from the snow-storm, and then, when they had well frightened you, my poor darling, with their moanings and rushings about, they tried to make their escape; but you effectually stopped them by slamming the door in their faces. There, at any

rate, we three found them, and very pleased they seemed when we let them out.'

'And did you find that skull on the old tomb?'

'No! we found your footmarks there, and the place where your plaid had swept the snow from the slab; but the skull was gone.'

'And here it is,' she said triumphantly, as she produced it from the place where she had put it for safety. 'It's a strange thing for a love token, Donald, or for a New Year's gift, but I went through all I did to gain it for your dear sake.'

Then her lover took her in his arms. 'And I have brought a Hogmanay gift for you, dear,' and from a dainty little box he produced a cairngorm brooch, with which she might fasten her shawl or plaid when she went to kirk on the Sabbath; and from a still smaller box—which, in her eyes at least, looked far daintier than the other—he showed her a plain gold ring, which just fitted the third finger of her left hand, 'for,' as he said, 'there's no knowing what may happen, and how soon we may want to use it.' Then he vowed to her, amid many kisses, that he needed not such a cruel test to have been put upon her affection by his father's stern will; and that, come what might, he would marry her as soon as their banns or spurrings could be put up, without waiting for May-day.

And he did so, she being quite agreeable to the same, and no longer bound to Mr. Macbane as his servant; for the stern old father, taking a lesson by the events of that well-remembered night on the last day of the old year, and thankful for his escape from any evil that, through him, might have befallen Mary Morrison, gave his consent to her marriage with his son, and, with the promise that they would still continue to live with him at the farm, divided his fortune with them. On the wedding-day, Janet Baillie, who was her bridesmaid, told Mary, in strict confidence, that it would not be many months before she followed her example, for that she had promised to be married to the young miller at Muasdale who had been so long paying her attention. And, to add to the events of the happy day, the laird of Saddell, who had been told of that midnight visit of Mary Morrison to the old church, slaughtered a fine buck that had played his part on that occasion, and sent him over as a gift to Mary, in order that a haunch of venison might grace the wedding-feast of the Brave Girl of Glenbarr.

My New Year's Eve among the Mummies.

BY J. ARBUTHNOT WILSON.

I HAVE been a wanderer and a vagabond on the face of the earth for a good many years now, and I have certainly had some odd adventures in my time ; but I can assure you, I never spent twenty-four queerer hours than those which I passed some twelve months since in the great unopened Pyramid of Abu Yilla.

The way I got there was itself a very strange one. I had come to Egypt for a winter tour with the Fitz-Simkinses, to whose daughter Editha I was at that precise moment engaged. You will probably remember that old Fitz-Simkins belonged originally to the wealthy firm of Simkinson and Stokoe, worshipful vintners ; but when the senior partner retired from the business and got his knighthood, the College of Heralds opportunely discovered that his ancestors had changed their fine old Norman name for its English equivalent some time about the reign of King Richard I. ; and they immediately authorised the old gentleman to resume the patronymic and the armorial bearings of his distinguished forefathers. It's really quite astonishing how often these curious coincidences crop up at the College of Heralds.

Of course it was a great catch for a landless and briefless barrister like myself—dependent on a small fortune in South American securities, and my precarious earnings as a writer of burlesque—to secure such a valuable prospective property as Editha Fitz-Simkins. To be sure, the girl was undeniably plain ; but I have known plainer girls than she was, whom forty thousand pounds converted into My Ladies : and if Editha hadn't really fallen over head and ears in love with me, I suppose old Fitz-Simkins would never have consented to such a match. As it was, however, we had flirted so openly and so desperately during the Scarborough season, that it would have been difficult for Sir Peter to break it off : and so I had come to Egypt on a tour of insurance to secure my prize, following in the wake of my future mother-in-law, whose lungs were supposed to require a genial climate—though in my private opinion they were really as creditable a pair of pulmonary appendages as ever drew breath.

Nevertheless, the course of our true love did not run so smoothly as might have been expected. Editha found me less ardent than a devoted squire should be ; and on the very last night of the old

year she got up a regulation lovers' quarrel, because I had sneaked away from the boat that afternoon, under the guidance of our dragoman, to witness the seductive performances of some fair Ghawázi, the dancing girls of a neighbouring town. How she found it out heaven only knows, for I gave that rascal Dimitri five piastres to hold his tongue: but she did find it out somehow, and chose to regard it as an offence of the first magnitude: a mortal sin only to be expiated by three days of penance and humiliation.

I went to bed that night, in my hammock on deck, with feelings far from satisfactory. We were moored against the bank at Abu Yilla, the most pestiferous hole between the cataracts and the Delta. The mosquitoes were worse than the ordinary mosquitoes of Egypt, and that is saying a great deal. The heat was oppressive even at night, and the malaria from the lotus beds rose like a palpable mist before my eyes. Above all, I was getting doubtful whether Editha Fitz-Simkins might not after all slip between my fingers. I felt wretched and feverish: and yet I had delightful interlusive recollections, in between, of that lovely little Gháziyah, who danced that exquisite, marvellous, entrancing, delicious, and awfully oriental dance that I saw in the afternoon.

By Jove, she *was* a beautiful creature. Eyes like two full moons; hair like Milton's *Penseroso*; movements like a poem of Swinburne's set to action. If Editha was only a faint picture of that girl now! Upon my word, I was falling in love with a Gháziyah!

Then the mosquitoes came again. Buzz—buzz—buzz. I make a lunge at the loudest and biggest, a sort of prima donna in their infernal opera. I kill the prima donna, but ten more shrill performers come in its place. The frogs croak dismally in the reedy shallows. The night grows hotter and hotter still. At last, I can stand it no longer. I rise up, dress myself lightly, and jump ashore to find some way of passing the time.

Yonder, across the flat, lies the great unopened Pyramid of Abu Yilla. We are going to-morrow to climb to the top; but I will take a turn to reconnoitre in that direction now. I walk across the moonlit fields, my soul still divided between Editha and the Gháziyah, and approach the solemn mass of huge, antiquated granite blocks standing out so grimly against the pale horizon. I feel half awake, half asleep, and altogether feverish: but I poke about the base in an aimless sort of way, with a vague idea that I may perhaps discover by chance the secret of its sealed entrance, which has ere now baffled so many pertinacious explorers and learned Egyptologists.

As I walk along the base, I remember old Herodotus's story, like a page from the 'Arabian Nights,' of how King Rhampsinitus built himself a treasury, wherein one stone turned on a pivot like a door; and how the builder availed himself of this his cunning device to steal gold from the king's storehouse. Suppose the entrance to the unopened Pyramid should be by such a door. It would be curious if I should chance to light upon the very spot.

I stood in the broad moonlight, near the north-east angle of the great pile, at the twelfth stone from the corner. A random fancy struck me, that I might turn this stone by pushing it inward on the left side. I leant against it with all my weight, and tried to move it on the imaginary pivot. Did it give way a fraction of an inch? No, it must have been mere fancy. Let me try again. Surely it is yielding! Gracious Osiris, it has moved an inch or more! My heart beats fast, either with fever or excitement, and I try a third time. The rust of centuries on the pivot wears slowly off, and the stone turns ponderously round, giving access to a low dark passage.

It must have been madness which led me to enter the forgotten corridor, alone, without torch or match, at that hour of the evening: but at any rate, I entered. The passage was tall enough for a man to walk erect, and I could feel, as I groped slowly along, that the wall was composed of smooth polished granite, while the floor sloped away downward with a slight but regular descent. I walked with trembling heart and faltering feet for some forty or fifty yards down the mysterious vestibule: and then I felt myself brought suddenly to a standstill by a block of stone placed right across the pathway. I had had nearly enough for one evening, and I was preparing to return to the boat, agog with my new discovery, when my attention was suddenly arrested by an incredible, a perfectly miraculous fact.

The block of stone which barred the passage was faintly visible as a square, by means of a struggling belt of light streaming through the seams. There must be a lamp or other flame burning within. What if this were a door like the outer one, leading into a chamber perhaps inhabited by some dangerous band of outcasts? The light was a sure evidence of human occupation: and yet the outer door swung rustily on its pivot as though it had never been opened for ages. I paused a moment in fear before I ventured to try the stone: and then, urged on once more by some insane impulse, I turned the massive block with all my might to the left. It gave way slowly like its neighbour, and finally opened into the central hall.

Never as long as I live shall I forget the ecstasy of terror, astonishment, and blank dismay which seized upon me when I

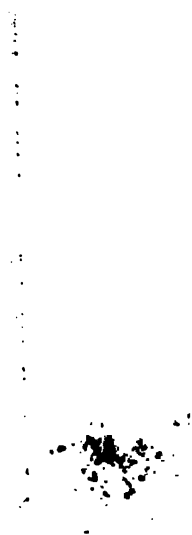
stepped into that seemingly enchanted chamber. A blaze of light first burst upon my eyes, from jets of gas arranged in regular rows tier above tier, upon the columns and walls of the vast apartment. Huge pillars, richly painted with red, yellow, blue, and green decorations, stretched in endless succession down the dazzling aisles. A floor of polished syenite reflected the splendour of the lamps, and afforded a base for red granite sphinxes and dark purple images in porphyry of the cat-faced goddess Pasht, whose form I knew so well at the Louvre and the British Museum. But I had no eyes for any of these lesser marvels, being wholly absorbed in the greatest marvel of all: for there, in royal state and with mitred head, a living Egyptian king, surrounded by his coiffured court, was banqueting in the flesh upon a real throne, before a table laden with Memphian delicacies!

I stood transfixed with awe and amazement, my tongue and my feet alike forgetting their office, and my brain whirling round and round, as I remember it used to whirl when my health broke down utterly at Cambridge after the Classical Tripos. I gazed fixedly at the strange picture before me, taking in all its details in a confused way, yet quite incapable of understanding or realising any part of its true import. I saw the king in the centre of the hall, raised on a throne of granite inlaid with gold and ivory; his head crowned with the peaked cap of Rameses, and his curled hair flowing down his shoulders in a set and formal frizz. I saw priests and warriors on either side, dressed in the costumes which I had often carefully noted in our great collections; while bronze-skinned maids, with light garments round their waists, and limbs displayed in graceful picturesqueness, waited upon them, half nude, as in the wall paintings which we had lately examined at Karnak and Syene. I saw the ladies, clothed from head to foot in dyed linen garments, sitting apart in the background, banqueting by themselves at a separate table; while dancing girls, like older representatives of my yesternoon friends, the Ghawázi, tumbled before them in strange attitudes, to the music of four-stringed harps and long straight pipes. In short, I beheld as in a dream the whole drama of everyday Egyptian royal life, playing itself out anew under my eyes, in its real original properties and personages.

Gradually, as I looked, I became aware that my hosts were no less surprised at the appearance of their anachronistic guest than was the guest himself at the strange living panorama which met his eyes. In a moment music and dancing ceased; the banquet paused in its course, and the king and his nobles stood up in undisguised astonishment to survey the strange intruder.

Some minutes passed before anyone moved forward on either





side. At last a young girl of royal appearance, yet strangely resembling the Gháziyah of Abu Yilla, and recalling in part the laughing maiden in the foreground of Mr. Long's great canvas at the previous Academy, stepped out before the throng.

'May I ask you,' she said in Ancient Egyptian, 'who you are, and why you come hither to disturb us?'

I was never aware before that I spoke or understood the language of the hieroglyphics: yet I found I had not the slightest difficulty in comprehending or answering her question. To say the truth, Ancient Egyptian, though an extremely tough tongue to decipher in its written form, becomes as easy as love-making when spoken by a pair of lips like that Pharaonic princess's. It is really very much the same as English, pronounced in a rapid and somewhat indefinite whisper, and with all the vowels left out.

'I beg ten thousand pardons for my intrusion,' I answered apologetically; 'but I did not know that this Pyramid was inhabited, or I should not have entered your residence so rudely. As for the points you wish to know, I am an English tourist, and you will find my name upon this card;' saying which I handed her one from the case which I had fortunately put into my pocket, with conciliatory politeness. The princess examined it closely, but evidently did not understand its import.

'In return,' I continued, 'may I ask you in what august presence I now find myself by accident?'

A court official stood forth from the throng, and answered in a set heraldic tone: 'In the presence of the illustrious monarch, Brother of the Sun, Thothmes the Twenty-seventh, king of the Eighteenth Dynasty.'

'Salute the Lord of the World,' put in another official in the same regulation drone.

I bowed low to his Majesty, and stepped out into the hall. Apparently my obeisance did not come up to Egyptian standards of courtesy, for a suppressed titter broke audibly from the ranks of bronze-skinned waiting-women. But the king graciously smiled at my attempt, and turning to the nearest nobleman observed in a voice of great sweetness and self-contained majesty: 'This stranger, Ombos, is certainly a very curious person. His appearance does not at all resemble that of an Ethiopian or other savage, nor does he look like the pale-faced sailors who come to us from the Achaian land beyond the sea. His features, to be sure, are not very different from theirs; but his extraordinary and singularly inartistic dress shows him to belong to some other barbaric race.'

I glanced down at my waistcoat, and saw that I was wearing my

tourist's check suit, of grey and mud colour, with which a Bond Street tailor had supplied me just before leaving town, as the latest thing out in fancy tweeds. Evidently these Egyptians must have a very curious standard of taste not to admire our pretty and graceful style of male attire.

'If the dust beneath Your Majesty's feet may venture upon a suggestion,' put in the officer whom the king had addressed, 'I would hint that this young man is probably a stray visitor from the utterly uncivilised lands of the North. The headgear which he carries in his hand obviously betrays an Arctic habitat.'

I had instinctively taken off my round felt hat in the first moment of surprise, when I found myself in the midst of this strange throng, and I was standing now in a somewhat embarrassed posture, holding it awkwardly before me like a shield to protect my chest.

'Let the stranger cover himself,' said the king.

'Barbarian intruder, cover yourself,' cried the herald. I noticed throughout that the king never directly addressed anybody save the higher officials around him.

I put on my hat as desired. 'A most uncomfortable and silly form of tiara indeed,' said the great Thothmes.

'Very unlike your noble and awe-inspiring mitre, Lion of Egypt,' answered Ombos.

'Ask the stranger his name,' the king continued.

It was useless to offer another card, so I mentioned it in a clear voice.

'An uncouth and almost unpronounceable designation truly,' commented his Majesty to the Grand Chamberlain beside him. 'These savages speak strange languages, widely different from the flowing tongue of Memnon and Sesostris.'

The chamberlain bowed his assent with three low genuflections. I began to feel a little abashed at these personal remarks, and I *almost* think (though I shouldn't like it to be mentioned in the Temple) that a blush rose to my cheek.

The beautiful princess, who had been standing near me meanwhile in an attitude of statuesque repose, now appeared anxious to change the current of the conversation. 'Dear father,' she said with a respectful inclination, 'surely the stranger, barbarian though he be, cannot relish such pointed allusions to his person and costume. We must let him feel the grace and delicacy of Egyptian refinement. Then he may perhaps carry back with him some faint echo of its cultured beauty to his northern wilds.'

'Nonsense, Hatason,' replied Thothmes XXVII. testily. 'Savages have no feelings, and they are as incapable of appreciat-

ing Egyptian sensibility as the chattering crow is incapable of attaining the dignified reserve of the sacred crocodile.'

'Your Majesty is mistaken,' I said, recovering my self-possession gradually and realising my position as a free-born Englishman before the court of a foreign despot—though I must allow that I felt rather less confident than usual, owing to the fact that we were not represented in the Pyramid by a British Consul—'I am an English tourist, a visitor from a modern land whose civilisation far surpasses the rude culture of early Egypt; and I am accustomed to respectful treatment from all other nationalities, as becomes a citizen of the First Naval Power in the World.'

My answer created a profound impression. 'He has spoken to the Brother of the Sun,' cried Ombos in evident perturbation. 'He must be of the Blood Royal in his own tribe, or he would never have dared to do so!'

'Otherwise,' added a person whose dress I recognised as that of a priest, 'he must be offered up in expiation to Amon-Ra immediately.'

As a rule I am a decently truthful person, but under these alarming circumstances I ventured to tell a slight fib with an air of nonchalant boldness. 'I am a younger brother of our reigning king,' I said without a moment's hesitation; for there was nobody present to gainsay me, and I tried to salve my conscience by reflecting that at any rate I was only claiming consanguinity with an imaginary personage.

'In that case,' said King Thothmes, with more geniality in his tone, 'there can be no impropriety in my addressing you personally. Will you take a place at our table next to myself, and we can converse together without interrupting a banquet which must be brief enough in any circumstances? Hatasou, my dear, you may seat yourself next to the barbarian prince.'

I felt a visible swelling to the proper dimensions of a Royal Highness as I sat down by the king's right hand. The nobles resumed their places, the bronze-skinned waitresses left off standing like soldiers in a row and staring straight at my humble self, the goblets went round once more, and a comely maid soon brought me meat, bread, fruits, and date wine.

All this time I was naturally burning with curiosity to inquire who my strange hosts might be, and how they had preserved their existence for so many centuries in this undiscovered hall; but I was obliged to wait until I had satisfied his Majesty of my own nationality, the means by which I had entered the pyramid, the general state of affairs throughout the world at the present moment, and fifty thousand other matters of a similar sort.

Thothmes utterly refused to believe my reiterated assertion that our existing civilisation was far superior to the Egyptian; 'because,' said he, 'I see from your dress that your nation is utterly devoid of taste or invention'; but he listened with great interest to my account of modern society, the steam-engine, the Permissive Prohibitory Bill, the telegraph, the House of Commons, Home Rule, and the other blessings of our advanced era, as well as to a brief *résumé* of European history from the rise of the Greek culture to the Russo-Turkish war. At last his questions were nearly exhausted, and I got a chance of making a few counter inquiries on my own account.

'And now,' I said, turning to the charming Hatasou, whom I thought a more pleasant informant than her august papa, 'I should like to know who *you* are.'

'What, don't you know?' she cried with unaffected surprise. 'Why, we're mummies.'

She made this astounding statement with just the same quiet unconsciousness as if she had said, 'we're French,' or 'we're Americans.' I glanced round the walls, and observed behind the columns, what I had not noticed till then—a large number of empty mummy-cases, with their lids placed carelessly by their sides.

'But what are you doing here?' I asked in a bewildered way.

'Is it possible,' said Hatasou, 'that you don't really know the object of embalming? Though your manners show you to be an agreeable and well-bred young man, you must excuse my saying that you are shockingly ignorant. We are made into mummies in order to preserve our immortality. Once in every thousand years we wake up for twenty-four hours, recover our flesh and blood, and banquet once more upon the mummied dishes and other good things laid by for us in the Pyramid. To-day is the first day of a millennium, and so we have waked up for the sixth time since we were first embalmed.'

'The *sixth* time?' I inquired incredulously. 'Then you must have been dead six thousand years.'

'Exactly so.'

'But the world has not yet existed so long,' I cried, in a fervour of orthodox horror.

'Excuse me, barbarian prince. This is the first day of the three hundred and twenty-seven thousandth millennium.'

My orthodoxy received a severe shock. However, I had been accustomed to geological calculations, and was somewhat inclined to accept the antiquity of man; so I swallowed the statement

without more ado. Besides, if such a charming girl as Hatasou had asked me at that moment to turn Mohammedan, or to worship Osiris, I believe I should incontinently have done so.

‘You wake up only for a single day and night, then?’ I said.

‘Only for a single day and night. After that, we go to sleep for another millennium.’

‘Unless you are meanwhile burned as fuel on the Cairo Railway,’ I added mentally. ‘But how,’ I continued aloud, ‘do you get these lights?’

‘The Pyramid is built above a spring of inflammable gas. We have a reservoir in one of the side chambers in which it collects during the thousand years. As soon as we awake, we turn it on at once from the tap, and light it with a lucifer match.’

‘Upon my word,’ I interposed, ‘I had no notion you Ancient Egyptians were acquainted with the use of matches.’

‘Very likely not. “There are more things in heaven and earth, Cephrenes, than are dreamt of in your philosophy,” as the bard of Philœ puts it.’

Further inquiries brought out all the secrets of that strange tomb-house, and kept me fully interested till the close of the banquet. Then the chief priest solemnly rose, offered a small fragment of meat to a deified crocodile, who sat in a meditative manner by the side of his deserted mummy-case, and declared the feast concluded for the night. All rose from their places, wandered away into the long corridors or side-aisles, and formed little groups of talkers under the brilliant gas-lamps.

For my part, I strolled off with Hatasou down the least illuminated of the colonnades, and took my seat beside a marble fountain, where several fish (gods of great sanctity, Hatasou assured me) were disporting themselves in a porphyry basin. How long we sat there I cannot tell, but I know that we talked a good deal about fish, and gods, and Egyptian habits, and Egyptian philosophy, and, above all, Egyptian love-making. The last-named subject we found very interesting, and when once we got fully started upon it, no diversion afterwards occurred to break the even tenour of the conversation. Hatasou was a lovely figure, tall, queenly, with smooth dark arms and neck of polished bronze: her big black eyes full of tenderness, and her long hair bound up into a bright Egyptian headdress, that harmonised to a tone with her complexion and her robe. The more we talked, the more desperately did I fall in love, and the more utterly oblivious did I become of my duty to Editha Fitz-Simkins. The mere ugly daughter of a rich and vulgar brand-new knight, forsooth, to show

off her airs before me, when here was a Princess of the Blood Royal of Egypt, obviously sensible to the attentions which I was paying her, and not unwilling to receive them with a coy and modest grace.

Well, I went on saying pretty things to Hatasou, and Hatasou went on deprecating them in a pretty little way, as who should say, 'I don't mean what I pretend to mean one bit'; until at last I may confess that we were both evidently as far gone in the disease of the heart called love as it is possible for two young people on first acquaintance to become. Therefore, when Hatasou pulled forth her watch—another piece of mechanism with which antiquaries used never to credit the Egyptian people—and declared that she had only three hours more to live, at least for the next thousand years, I fairly broke down, took out my handkerchief, and began to sob like a child of five years old.

Hatasou was deeply moved. Decorum forbade that she should console me with too much *empressement*; but she ventured to remove the handkerchief gently from my face, and suggested that there was yet one course open by which we might enjoy a little more of one another's society. 'Suppose,' she said quietly, 'you were to become a mummy. You would then wake up, as we do, every thousand years; and after you have tried it once, you will find it just as natural to sleep for a millennium as for eight hours. Of course,' she added with a slight blush, 'during the next three or four solar cycles there would be plenty of time to conclude any other arrangements you might possibly contemplate, before the occurrence of another glacial epoch.'

This mode of regarding time was certainly novel and somewhat bewildering to people who ordinarily reckon its lapse by weeks and months; and I had a vague consciousness that my relations with Editha imposed upon me a moral necessity of returning to the outer world, instead of becoming a millennial mummy. Besides, there was the awkward chance of being converted into fuel and dissipated into space before the arrival of the next waking day. But I took one look at Hatasou, whose eyes were filling in turn with sympathetic tears, and that look decided me. I flung Editha, life, and duty to the dogs, and resolved at once to become a mummy.

There was no time to be lost. Only three hours remained to us, and the process of embalming, even in the most hasty manner, would take up fully two. We rushed off to the chief priest, who had charge of the particular department in question. He at once acceded to my wishes, and briefly explained the mode in which they usually treated the corpse.

That word suddenly aroused me. 'The corpse!' I cried; 'but I am alive. You can't embalm me living.'

'We can,' replied the priest, 'under chloroform.'

'Chloroform!' I echoed, growing more and more astonished: 'I had no idea you Egyptians knew anything about it.'

'Ignorant barbarian!' he answered with a curl of the lip; 'you imagine yourself much wiser than the teachers of the world. If you were versed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, you would know that chloroform is one of our simplest and commonest anæsthetics.'

I put myself at once under the hands of the priest. He brought out the chloroform, and placed it beneath my nostrils, as I lay on a soft couch under the central court. Hatasou held my hand in hers, and watched my breathing with an anxious eye. I saw the priest leaning over me, with a clouded phial in his hand, and I experienced a vague sensation of smelling myrrh and spikenard. Next, I lost myself for a few moments, and when I again recovered my senses in a temporary break, the priest was holding a small greenstone knife, dabbled with blood, and I felt that a gash had been made across my breast. Then they applied the chloroform once more; I felt Hatasou give my hand a gentle squeeze; the whole panorama faded finally from my view; and I went to sleep for a seemingly endless time.

When I awoke again, my first impression led me to believe that the thousand years were over, and that I had come to life once more to feast with Hatasou and Thothmes in the Pyramid of Abu Yilla. But second thoughts, combined with closer observation of the surroundings, convinced me that I was really lying in a bedroom of Shepheard's Hotel at Cairo. An hospital nurse leant over me, instead of a chief priest; and I noticed no tokens of Editha Fitz-Simkins's presence. But when I endeavoured to make inquiries upon the subject of my whereabouts, I was peremptorily informed that I mustn't speak, as I was only just recovering from a severe fever, and might endanger my life by talking.

Some weeks later I learned the sequel of my night's adventure. The Fitz-Simkinses, missing me from the boat in the morning, at first imagined that I might have gone ashore for an early stroll. But after breakfast time, lunch time, and dinner time had gone past, they began to grow alarmed, and sent to look for me in all directions. One of their scouts, happening to pass the Pyramid, noticed that one of the stones near the north-east angle had been displaced, so as to give access to a dark passage, hitherto unknown. Calling several of his friends, for he was afraid to venture in alone, he passed down the corridor, and through a second gateway into the

central hall. There the Fellahin found me, lying on the ground, bleeding profusely from a wound on the breast, and in an advanced stage of malarious fever. They brought me back to the boat, and the Fitz-Simkinses conveyed me at once to Cairo, for medical attendance and proper nursing.

Editha was at first convinced that I had attempted to commit suicide because I could not endure having caused her pain, and she accordingly resolved to tend me with the utmost care through my illness. But she found that my delirious remarks, besides bearing frequent reference to a princess, with whom I appeared to have been on unexpectedly intimate terms, also related very largely to our *casus belli* itself, the dancing girls of Abu Yilla. Even this trial she might have borne, setting down the moral degeneracy which led me to patronise so degrading an exhibition as a first symptom of my approaching malady: but certain unfortunate observations, containing pointed and by no means flattering allusions to her personal appearance—which I contrasted, much to her disadvantage, with that of the unknown princess—these, I say, were things which she could not forgive; and she left Cairo abruptly with her parents for the Riviera, leaving behind a stinging note, in which she denounced my perfidy and empty-heartedness with all the flowers of feminine eloquence. From that day to this I have never seen her.

When I returned to London and proposed to lay this account before the Society of Antiquaries, all my friends dissuaded me on the ground of its apparent incredibility. They declare that I must have gone to the Pyramid already in a state of delirium, discovered the entrance by accident, and sunk exhausted when I reached the inner chamber. In answer, I would point out three facts. In the first place, I undoubtedly found my way into the unknown passage—for which achievement I afterwards received the gold medal of the Société Khédiviale, and of which I retain a clear recollection, differing in no way from my recollection of the subsequent events. In the second place, I had in my pocket, when found, a ring of Hatasou's, which I drew from her finger just before I took the chloroform, and put into my pocket as a keepsake. And in the third place, I had on my breast the wound which I saw the priest inflict with a knife of greenstone, and the scar may be seen on the spot to the present day. The absurd hypothesis of my medical friends, that I was wounded by falling against a sharp edge of rock, I must at once reject as unworthy a moment's consideration.

My own theory is either that the priest had not time to complete the operation, or of the Fitz-Simkins'

scouts frightened back the mummies to their cases an hour or so too soon. At any rate, there they all were, ranged around the walls undisturbed, the moment the Fellahin entered.

Unfortunately, the truth of my account cannot be tested for another thousand years. But as a copy of this *BELGRAVIA ANNUAL* will be preserved for the benefit of posterity in the British Museum, I hereby solemnly call upon Collective Humanity to try the veracity of this history by sending a deputation of archæologists to the Pyramid of Abu Yilla, on the last day of December, Two thousand eight hundred and seventy-seven. If they do not then find Thothmes and Hatasou feasting in the central hall exactly as I have described, I shall willingly admit that the story of my New Year's Eve among the Mummies is a vain hallucination, unworthy of credence at the hands of the scientific world.

A Literary Siren.

BY GERALD DIXON.

I.

SUNDAY at the Geranium! Not an exceptionally invigorating locality in which to spend an afternoon, but the gloominess of the day and the emptiness of the club suited my mood. For I was dissatisfied with most things, not excepting myself.

Indeed, 'things' had been going 'contrairy' for several months. My fitful sojourn in society had not filled me with any ecstatic sense of the privilege of entering that well-guarded enclosure, and my adventure at Hastings with Madame Clarisse and her enticing daughter had made me exceptionally wary in my approaches towards the gentler sex. Truly I was a most unenviable mortal! Blessed with good health, a fair income, and having nothing whatever to do but to marry, settle, and inherit my grandmother's estate, here was I, at the age of six-and-thirty, a wanderer, a forlorn outcast, a miserable wretch! Other men, who possessed none of my worldly advantages, were serene, happy, jovial. Some were married and happy; others were married and unhappy—yet for that I am convinced they had only themselves to thank. As I looked out of the bay window into empty St. James's Street on that dull Sabbath afternoon, I felt, to quote a well-worn epigram, that life was anything but beer and skittles (a beverage and a diversion to which I am by no means prone, by the way), and that even if it were I was by no means certain that I should appreciate existence one whit the more.

The Geranium is not a fashionable club, though many of its members almost succeed in persuading themselves that it is. It stands in a fashionable street, in the neighbourhood of the most exclusive clubs in the world, possesses a decent *chef*, a fair cellar, a luxurious smoking-room, and tolerates billiards on Sundays. Whist-players have been known to sit over their rubber till 4 a.m. without incurring a rebuke from the committee, and seltzers and alcoholic stimulants are procurable as late as 3.30. A house dinner at three-and-sixpence, well cooked and well served, may be discussed every day between six and eight, the annual subscription is eight guineas, and the entrance fee is ten. There is every disposition on the part of the authorities to provide comfort, and there is an evident effort to impart an air of what may be generally described

as 'good form.' But, whilst accomplishing the former, it is not so much the fault of the committee as that of the members themselves that they only partially succeed in achieving the latter. The reason is, perhaps, not a very mighty task to discover. The Geranium does not owe its existence to the voluntary association of a number of men possessing kindred tastes in politics or art; it is not even a professional club—no, the Geranium sprang into being through the cleverness of a 'club promoter,' who, having obtained a lease of the premises and the names of a few gentlemen prominent in politics and society, widely advertised the advantages of the club, together with the names of the 'decoy' committee, and succeeded in gathering several hundred persons of more or less reputation as members. At present the Geranium consists of several youngish medical men, twenty or thirty barristers, many government clerks, a few attorneys, a sufficient number of retired soldiers and officers of militia, a regrettable sprinkling of undeniable Israelites, and a plethora of well-dressed and tolerably well-behaved young men whose occupations are situated somewhere in the city.

Our committee works on reasonable terms with the proprietor, but does not include, as heretofore, the prominent persons whose names were advertised with such effect. No, the prominent ones, who, by the way, were never asked for subscriptions, have gradually retired; but still we can boast of an Irish peer of doubtful solvency, and a broad-church doctor of divinity, whose taste in cigars is undeniable, and whose sermons, I am given to understand, are entertaining and brief.

Of this desirable institution I have been a member for about three years, and, though I do not arrogate to myself any idea of prominence, I may confess that I am not altogether an obscure member. My taste in old china and Rembrandt etchings is generally allowed, and my literary reputation, dearly purchased by the publication of two tri-voluminous novels, is, without doubt, a feature of the club. The efforts of my fancy, elegantly bound in calf at my own expense, repose in the morning room, and I occasionally notice, with not unpardonable satisfaction, a brother member refreshing his mind in the perusal of these blameless tomes.

But on this particular Sunday my novels lay undisturbed on the bookshelf—in fact, the morning room was empty, with the exception of myself and old Major Thomas, who was distinctly snoring in an arm-chair at the other side of the apartment. The Major rarely does anything else, except drink whisky and tell naughty stories *fortissimo* in the smoking-room. It is his nature to snore, and he would die if he couldn't drink whisky.

I regarded Thomas with an eye of pity, threw away the journal which I had been endeavouring to read, and flung myself discontentedly into a luxurious *fauteuil*. The day, the club, life generally, were harmoniously dull. A cab, once every ten minutes, awoke the echoes of the silent way, a policeman paced mechanically the resounding pavement; everything was silent, commonplace, and, to me, thoroughly sympathetic.

Presently there was another rattle over the stones, as of a carriage rolling rapidly. I looked out of the bay window, and saw a perfectly appointed victoria driving down the street. The occupants were of different sexes. The lady seemed faultlessly dressed, and the man was equally well attired. The one I had never before seen, the other was Freddy Mansfield, a member of the Geranium, and a clerk in the Colonial Office, whose means of subsistence were of the vaguest character, but whose society seemed to be universally courted.

They rattled past me, and the sight gave me an excuse for indulging in my native curiosity as to who the lady might be, but presently left me in a mood of rather greater despondency than before.

‘Confound that boy!’ I thought. ‘With neither birth nor brains nor wealth, he makes a hundred friends, whilst I, without knowing it, contrive to contract a dozen enemies. What is the great difference between us? True, I am not frivolous and gay, but I fancy I am thoughtful, and in many respects original.’ And I thought of the two novels elegantly bound in calf, and very properly ignored the unfeeling criticisms that had been written about them.

Presently a waiter enters the room with a letter for me. It had arrived by the last post of Saturday, and the hall porter had neglected to hand it me when I entered. The missive was from my grandmother, and ran thus:—

My dear Ferdinand,—I have not heard from you for several weeks, and silence on your part generally implies failure and despondency. What an extraordinary creature you are, to be sure! When I was a girl, men never behaved as you seem to do, and, for the matter of that, as every other young man of my acquaintance does. What with your *cigars*, your *slang*, and your *book-writing*, it is difficult to distinguish a gentleman from a stable-boy or a literary hack—no, you are all alike nowadays. There are no such things as manners, and the *bel air* is vanished for ever. Still, *you personally* are not to blame for the change. You had no hand in extending the suffrage to plough-boys, or in teaching milk-maids the higher mathematics. If you had, you would no more be grandson of mine, I can tell you. Tell me how you are getting on, and whether there is any likelihood of your settling down. If you *don't* arrange your plans soon—I am getting impatient, mind you—I shall build

another wing to our local hospital, or marry you off to my companion Lavinia MacPeevish. Her blood is good, and she is still on this side of forty.

Your affectionate grandmother,
S. F.

P.S. MacPeevish has knitted you three pairs of stockings, and she's sent them to your chambers. She is a most exemplary person.

'Exemplary person!' I thought to myself. 'Benighted heathen would be a more appropriate expression. Three pairs of stockings! What on earth am I to do with them?' For I cannot wear knickerbockers, even in the country. Indeed, nature has not been liberal to me in the circumference of my lower limbs, however thoughtful she may have been in the generous expansiveness of my waist. However, I consoled myself with the thought that I was not actually compelled to wear these touching tributes of old-maidenly regard, even when I paid my annual visit to my grandmother; and I was convinced that Miss Lavinia MacPeevish was far too modest to notice whether the work of her nimble fingers graced my ankles or not.

From indulgence in surmises which my revered grandparent's letter had awakened, I was suddenly aroused by the advent of some noisy member turning over the papers, upsetting magazines, and finally dropping his umbrella. Turning in my chair, I saw Freddy Mansfield.

'Hullo, Killjoy, how are you? Been asleep, I suppose?' he asked carelessly.

His advent was eminently disagreeable to me. He looked fresh, and young, and healthy; he even seemed to be enjoying himself.

'No, sir. I never sleep in the daytime. I came here for the sake of quiet and meditation.'

'Lor! What an enjoyable afternoon you must have spent. Alone with your own thoughts, and you haven't fallen asleep? Extraordinary man!'

Freddy is no respecter of his seniors, and he is apt to indulge in a vein of small satire that even I have some difficulty in repressing. I did not on that occasion, however, think it due to myself to resent Freddy's brusqueness.

'Jolly day, isn't it?' he continued, looking out of the bay window, whistling the while. 'There's a delightful uncertainty as to whether you are going to be presently scorched or immediately drenched. I thoroughly enjoy a day like this.'

'Oh! *you* would enjoy anything,' I answer morosely.

'Yes, even your enlivening society, Killjoy! What are you going to do?'

‘Nothing.’

‘You always showed remarkable aptitude in accomplishing that, old man. But you’re quite right, of course; always stick to what you can do best. Dear old place this.’

‘What! The club?’

‘No; the neighbourhood—

The dear old street of clubs and cribs,
As north and south it stretches,
Still smacks of William’s pungent squibs
And Gillray’s fiercer sketches.
The good old dress, the grand old style,
The *mots*, the racy stories,
The wine, the wit, the dice, the bile,
The hate of Whigs and Tories!

I forget which of you literary fellows wrote the lines; but they are not half bad. Are you the culprit?’

‘No,’ I returned loftily. ‘I never write verse.’

‘Not even by way of a joke?’ he asked carelessly.

‘No, sir. I never make jokes.’

‘Of course not,’ says Freddy demurely. ‘You—er—you borrow them.’

If I had had an appropriate repartee handy, I would have hurled it at Freddy Mansfield instantaneously. But I am not brilliant in the afternoon. A glass or two of generous wine and the society of a couple of sympathetic women quicken my memory, and I become bright, even epigrammatic. But at that moment I was actually dull.

‘Blithesome lad,’ I answered, closing my eyes. ‘Be giddy while you may.’

‘Then suppose we get giddy together,’ he cried. ‘What do you say? Suppose we dine here, earlyish, and then you come along with me; eh?’

‘Along with *you*? Where?’

‘To a delightful little evening party. Lovely women, chivalrous men; *petit souper* at 11.30; and—*cigarettes permises*.’

‘It *sounds* well, Freddy, but is it—er—er—you know, strictly *proper*?’

‘Confound it, Killjoy, what do you mean?’

‘Ha! ha! a joke, Freddy, that’s all,’ I added quickly. ‘Still, you know, Sunday night, and—cigarettes, and—by Jove! I think I’ll go.’

II.

AFTER an agreeable little dinner and a subsequent cigar, Freddy and I engaged a hansom and drove westwards. 'Now tell me who the people are we are going to visit,' said I.

'Mrs. Hill is the lady's name.'

'Widow?'

'I shouldn't wonder!'

'But don't you know?'

'No: I have never inquired after Mister Hill. If charming women do not refer to their husbands before me, I make a point of never asking questions about them. It isn't safe.'

'You are sure she is not another Madame Clarisse?' I asked anxiously.

'Quite sure. Mabel Hill is true grit. Without being absolutely beautiful, she is undoubtedly fascinating, and her Sunday evenings are an institution. Wait, and you will know fast enough.'

'Is she young?'

'Whew!' returned Freddy, pulling a long face. 'How on earth am I to tell? She *looks* young; and that, I take it, is all she need do. But, by the way, you saw her this afternoon from the club window.'

'Oh! that was Mrs. Hill, eh? *Good!* We shall be friends, no doubt.'

And so we were, sure enough; but I must not anticipate.

Our destination was Kensington, more specially a neat and not unpicturesque villa of recent erection. The house stood in its own grounds behind a row of lime trees, between which certain queer and conical gables were visible. The walls were built of red brick picked out with white stone, the windows were high and narrow, and there was generally that pretentious effort at *decoration* about the place which is much in vogue with young *artists* nowadays when they begin building for themselves.

Inside, the villa was cosy and alluring. The light was subdued, and in a cursory glance I noticed several good old mezzo-tints on the walls, some Chippendale furniture, and a specimen or two of genuine Nankin blue. In the drawing-room there was music; and Freddy and I waited in the hall till the song should be concluded.

'How d'ye do, Mrs. Hill?' asked Freddy, when we were ushered in. 'I have brought my friend Killjoy with me. He is dying to know you. Of course you have read his books, and all that sort of thing?'

At the word 'books,' Mrs. Hill raised her grey eyes quickly, and honoured me with an interesting smile, or perhaps I ought to say a smile which was the result of a sudden interest she took in me. I am anything but an egotist, but this was exactly the impression her first smile produced.

'So glad you have come, Mr. Killjoy!' and then she lent me her hand for a moment. It was bemitted and shapely. The faint pressure she accorded me seemed to say, 'I have expected you; you have come at last; protect me.'

I said nothing, but I looked at her. She was not beautiful, but her figure was exquisite—either that, or her dressmaker was an artist. Her robe was black, and fitted her with that close fidelity to detail which renders modern costume more natural perhaps than picturesque. Her hair was short, and was allowed to run riot about her brow; her face was pale, her features were regular, and her mouth was rather larger than absolutely necessary. But whatever her features lacked in repose was amply atoned for by the sweet intelligence, the electric attraction of her smile. Then her voice was low and soft, and her motions were slow and languid. She was a woman born to rule men, no doubt, I thought, but her sway would be insinuating rather than commanding; persuasive rather than imperative.

The two drawing rooms were tolerably full; that is to say, just full enough to allow everyone to change his interlocutor without embarrassment, and empty enough for everyone to breathe freely and perambulate at will. I noticed the look of easy affluence which pervaded the apartment: the Italian water-colour drawings on the wall, the rich hangings from the mantelpiece, the quaint curios exposed upon it, the luxurious chairs, the tiny tables with their softly shaded lamps, the bunches of flowers and the clumps of delicate ferns, the Venetian looking-glasses reflecting light from odd corners, and the sweet perfume of scented gerania which came from the window-sills—all these desirable surroundings seemed to be necessarily a part of her as for one moment she allowed her bemitted right hand to lie in mine.

'So glad you have come!'

'And I am more than glad, for I am already enchanted.'

I thought my answer rather *à propos*, and began to pluck up courage. In a few minutes more, I said to myself, I shall burst into epigram.

She smiled once more, with a look of half surprise, half pleasure.

'Come, let me introduce you to somebody. They will all be burning to talk to you when they know who you are.'

Who could resist such an appeal? It was inspiring, it was intoxicating. The half-cynical adulation at the Geranium was nothing to it. Mrs. Hill was evidently a woman of rare discrimination and exquisite taste.

In the course of the next half-hour I was introduced to several persons: to Miss Brown, who writes those charming verses in the magazines under the pseudonym of 'Rosemary'; to M. le Vicomte de Bélettres, a distinguished foreigner residing in London, who speaks English with a Whitechapel accent; and to Mr. Clarence, the actor. Of these three, I had only heard of Mr. Clarence; but it was a matter of some delight to me to feel that each of these by no means undistinguished persons greeted me as a man of consequence and mark.

Of course there was music, and immediately conversation became general. Even the timid young attorney awkwardly regarding photographs at the window seemed inspired with a remark, and began to offer it to his nearest neighbour, a damsel with an unnatural waist, who appeared to agree with alacrity. For myself, music always sets me talking; not so much because it inspires me with ideas, as because it serves to keep my words from wandering to ears other than those they were intended to reach. It requires more nerve, possibly more impudence, than that I possess, to talk glibly to a pretty woman when I am certain that another man is listening to all I say, probably in order to ridicule me to the pretty one at the first opportunity. Congreve may be right as to the ability of music to soften rocks, bend oaks, and soothe hearts more savage than polite. He was a great dramatist, and even at the expense of probability one ought to agree with him. But neither he, nor Pope, nor Father Dryden himself, much as they wrote about music, ever put into words what Ferdinand Killjoy insists is St. Cecilia's most enjoyable attribute—

Music the greatest grief can charm,
And fate's severest rage disarm;
Music can soften pain to ease,
And make despair and madness please.

But I venture to affirm that it can accomplish even more desirable results in our nineteenth century life. It can make the dumb man talk, the timid maiden confidential, the hesitating lover emphatic; it closes the mouth of the babblers, disarms the punster, and renders *tête-à-tête* conversation easy and enjoyable.

Altogether, I have a generous appreciation of the advantages of music, and on that particular evening I made the most of the symphony.

The supper which Freddy had promised me was served at 11.30

precisely. My hostess was led in by the Vicomte, and I was on the point of being paired off with the poetess, when, with happy alacrity, I offered my arm to the damsel with the unnatural waist, thereby forestalling the attorney, who lapsed into his native timidity. Freddy, who would have made execrable puns before the Lord Chancellor, took in the poetess; nothing ever daunted him. I felt I should have been miserable with that poetess; the preposterous waist would be more under my control.

Everything passed off pleasantly. The diminutive lady by my side had evidently dined early, and I copiously helped her during the half-hour of her need. Glancing at her circumference, which I verily believe I could have spanned with my two hands, I was first surprised, then I wondered; last of all I began to think that the days of miracles had been revived. I contented myself with a grilled tomato and a couple of glasses of Pommery; but the marvel did not abate.

Mrs. Hüll was engaging the Vicomte with questions and disquisitions as to the probable tendency of the French drama, which made the poetess anxious to ascertain from so distinguished an authority what was the precise effect of the dramas of M. Dumas and the novels of M. Bélot upon the higher education of French women. M. le Vicomte was not perhaps quite so lucid in his explanations as emphatic in his declarations as to the superiority of the French stage over the English, a remark which my hostess capped by the assertion, daintily expressed, that English fiction was far superior to French. And uttering this observation she glanced at me.

‘Do you not agree with me, Mr. Killjoy?’

‘In everything and always, madam,’ I replied. Hurrah! I was making an impression; for she smiled again—oh! so meaningly; just as if she wished I always would, but half doubted the fact as too good to be true. Yes, though at least six feet of white table-cloth and appetising viands divided us, we were one in thought and sympathy. In my joy, I helped the diminutive lady to another plate of *pâté de foie gras*, and myself to more Pommery.

Then came cigarettes and soda water, and with them Freddy Mansfield began to be noisy; so he was immediately ordered to the piano, where he accredited himself well enough with imitations of singers and popular actors. In fact, Freddy is undeniably amusing as a *farceur*—hence his popularity. I think I must have remained almost the last: I was anxious to say a few more words to my hostess, when she detained me just as the last guests were leaving.

‘Mr. Killjoy, I am *so* glad to have seen you. I—I want your advice. I am all alone, you know, and—will you give it to me?’

‘My dear lady, *of course*,’ I exclaimed, almost too rapturously.

‘I am a literary woman! Do you know?’

I felt immediately alarmed, and must have shown some of my consternation, for she added, with one touch of her fingers on my arm,—

‘Don’t be angry with me: I have nothing else to live for *now*. But I hardly know how to begin—you *will* advise me, *won’t* you?’

What could I say? Of course I would advise her; I, the experienced novelist, whose two productions had cost nearly five hundred pounds.

‘Then,’ she added softly, ‘will you come and dine here to-morrow at 7.30? No one but ourselves, and we will have a nice long chat. Yes? Then good-bye, and so *many* thanks.’

And then I hurried away, and stepped into a hansom, and drove to the Geranium Club. Arrived at the smoking-room, I found Major Thomas telling a story to Freddy Mansfield, Mr. Clarence, and the Vicomte; the inevitable glass of whisky and water standing by his side. This was an unexpected *rencontre*, but still I was by no means indisposed to prosecute my acquaintanceship with M. le Vicomte de Bélettres.

‘Hullo! Killjoy!’ cries Freddy. ‘Back already? Why, let me see, you couldn’t have been more than twenty minutes saying good-bye!’

I didn’t choose to be chaffed before a Viscount, so I remarked carelessly,—

‘Yes, I think I was just twenty-three, according to my watch.’ Then, addressing the Vicomte, I added, ‘Charming evening, was it not?’

‘Ah!’ said he with a shrug; ‘but it is always so. Messes ‘ill is *chic*. By Dickens! she knows her way about.’

‘Delightful creature!’ remarked Mr. Clarence absently, looking up at nothing.

‘She is —er— a widow?’ I asked, gently feeling my way.

‘Oh! yes,’ returned the Vicomte, in a tone that seemed to imply that she had been born and bred one.

‘No,’ said Mr. Clarence, more emphatically; ‘divorced.’

‘What?’ I cried. ‘Mrs. Hill a *divorcée*?’

‘Well, not exactly that. *She* divorced *him*, don’t you know. He used to jump on her, or get drunk, or something or other.’

‘Are you quite certain as to the facts?’ I asked anxiously.

'Well,' said Mr. Clarence with an air of pitying condescension, 'I think I ought to know something about the Divorce Court.'

'Yes, as third party you have undoubted experience,' quoth Freddy. 'But, hang it, don't let us rake up old scandals; let us—here, waiter, four brandies and sodas.'

'Ah!' grunted the Major, gulping down his whisky. 'Talking about brandy reminds me of Paddy Blake of ours. It was at the siege of Bhurtpore in '26, when Lord Combermere, turning round in his saddle, says to me, "Thomas, my boy," says he——'

But the rest of the story I never heard: for, obeying a law of nature which directs me to avoid bores, I suddenly remembered I had some letters to write, and flew precipitately to my chambers.

III.

THE next morning I awoke suddenly, with a general notion that I had some important and agreeable business to transact. Most people have experienced the sensation: some on their wedding morning, others when an unexpected legacy has opened to them a new field for enterprise, or rendered unnecessary the daily prosecution of uncongenial toil. I awoke with a hazy idea that I had a fresh object in life, that some happy combination of events was about to realise for me as much of Elysium as my sufferings and my merits entitled me to.

But the aged ancestress engaged my first attention. I wrote her a cordial, cheerful letter, thanking her for her good wishes, and duly acknowledging the three pairs of stockings which had arrived that morning. After breakfast I took my Rochefoucauld from the shelf and noted some poignant passages which might possibly be turned to useful account during the evening; then, after an hour's perusal of the 'American Joe Miller,' I felt myself ready for the fray. Still, as several hours must elapse between luncheon and 7.30, I strolled to the club; but even in my favourite corner I felt restless; so I jumped into a cab, drove to Covent Garden, and ordered a magnificent bouquet to be sent to my chambers at seven sharp.

Arrived at home again, I found a delicately perfumed little note awaiting me. I did not recognise the handwriting, but I felt that it must be *hers*. Agony! Did she wish to postpone our tête-à-tête? I tore open the envelope and read:—

Monday morning.

Dear Mr. Killjoy,—*Would* you mind dining at 6.30, instead of 7.30 as arranged? Hoping you will pardon this change in our plans,

I am, ever your sincerely,

MABEL HILL.

I breathed again. Dinner at 6.30! Then I had only just time to dress and be off. But what delightful frankness her letter displayed! Our plans, too! 'Mabel! Mabel!! Ma belle, ma belle! Here, Smithson, where the deuce are my white ties?'

I reached Kensington punctual to the minute, but of course without the bouquet. I was ushered into the fragrant drawing-room, and she rose and received me. The bemitted right hand again fluttered for an instant in mine, and the clear grey eyes were raised with one confiding glance. She was closely dressed in black as before, but the sombre colour of her costume was relieved by a gold and crimson sash of oriental manufacture round her waist.

She placed the tips of her fingers on my right forearm and led me to the dining-room. I shall not attempt to describe the banquet, I know that I should fail if I did. My heart was too full for ordinary food; besides, the time of day was at least sixty minutes in advance of my usual dinner hour. Nor was I more successful in adding a piquant flavour to my remarks. Somehow, the conversation *would* not be led into the channels where bright epigrammatic torpedoes were awaiting it. It is difficult to be tender even over sweetbreads when a couple of servants are attending to one's wants, and it is useless to cast speaking glances towards your companion when a silver *épergne* three feet high only reflects them back to you distorted and hideous. Altogether, the dinner did not answer my fond expectations. Mabel chatted pleasantly. Even the most commonplace matters grew interesting when she lightly referred to them, but still I was conscious of making no head-way.

The dinner was over at last. She rose and said:—

'If you would like to smoke, pray do. The carriage will be round in a quarter of an hour.'

'The carriage?'

'O dear me, I really forgot to tell you the reason why I asked you to dine an hour earlier. The fact is, Mr. Clarence sent me a box for the Fortune Theatre, where he is acting, you know. I thought perhaps you might like to go—*will* you?'

This, then, was the end of our *tête-à-tête*. But I bore the blow like a man: that is to say, I was taken aback, and could only murmur, 'Delighted, I'm sure.'

'I'm so glad,' she answered dreamily. 'Then smoke your cigar and have some claret, and in a quarter of an hour I will be ready.'

She glided from the room, and I sank into my chair, whilst the obsequious domestic placed a decanter before me. After the

second glass—the wine was genuine ‘Mouton de Rothschild’—my spirits rose. After all, a private box was by no means a bad substitute for a dim drawing-room, and its narrow confines necessitate a propinquity to the beloved object which is not always justifiable in a wider area. After a third glass I was convinced that all was for the best.

We drove to the Strand in a neat little brougham, and during our journey Mabel confided to me her wishes. She had written a novel. She was so lonely and unhappy now. I knew her piteous story?—of course everyone did; and she had rushed into fiction in order to get out of herself.

I sympathised with her. I am always good at sympathy after dinner.

‘Now, what I really would take as the greatest kindness you could possibly do me, dear Mr. Killjoy, is to read my book and give me your candid—mind, your *candid*—opinion; and then, if you think my poor work worth anything, and would recommend it to a publisher, I should be so grateful. You will read it, *won’t* you?’

One burst of sympathy after dinner can but be followed by a second, if artistically invited. Besides, I felt rather proud to discover that, whatever the papers might say of my books, the public had its own opinion.

I promised her the benefit of my criticism and the weight of my influence; then she laid her bemitted hand upon mine for a moment.

‘Thank you, dear friend; I will send the MS. round to you in the morning.’

We took our places in the box. The overture was being played, and I was congratulating myself upon the prospect of at least two hours of bliss, when the door behind me was opened, and in walked Le Vicomte de Bélettres. His manner showed that he was expected; he shook hands with Mabel, bowed to me, and presented her with a bouquet.

‘Oh! thanks, Vicomte,’ she cried, delighted; ‘my favourite flowers, too. How *thoughtful*!’

I ground my teeth in baffled rage. Confound this foreign popinjay! and the far more tasteful bouquet for which I had that morning paid a couple of guineas was lying useless and fading in my chambers.

No more bliss for me that evening. The Vicomte had murdered conversation as far as I was concerned, though he chatted volubly all night. At last the curtain fell; the Vicomte and I saw Mabel into her brougham, and with fictitious fervour bade each

other good night. I walked home and dashed the unoffending flowers into the grate.

But the next morning I was calmer, for an immense pile of MS. was already reposing on my table. Ah! Mabel, Mabel! Well, here goes! and I began to read the dear handwriting at once. The sweet occupation lasted about three days. The story was pretty in some parts, gruesome in others. There was a hazy indistinctness about the characters which reminded me of the outline of Mr. Whistler's later pictures, and there was evidence of that insipid reality which finds fragrance not so much in budding nature as in decay. Still, these eccentricities were fashionable, and would no doubt commend themselves to wary publishers.

So I called at Mabel's house, intending to unbosom myself. But she was not at home—gone to Dublin, the servant told me.

During the next three weeks I had two letters from her. She had been summoned to Ireland suddenly, would be back soon: in the mean time, *would* I push her interests with the publishers? She could never forget my kindness, my generosity, *never*. On her return, she would thank me in person. When I took the novel to my own publishers, I was received with laughter. They had declined it six months ago. The second firm to which I applied jeered me; they had refused it a year ago. The third had suffered too much already from amateur authors; and the fourth promised to think about it on the receipt of my cheque for a hundred pounds. These rebuffs only exhilarated me. I would try all, dare all, for Mabel's sake. But at the end of a month's persistent labour I grew less hopeful, and believed I would take a day's holiday.

On the following Sunday morning I accepted an invitation to breakfast with Freddy Mansfield. The Vicomte and Mr. Clarence were the other guests, and although our host was as flippant and light-hearted as ever, a distrustful cordiality reigned over the rest.

When our cigars were lighted, Freddy burst upon us with an item of news.

'Any of you fellows heard about Mrs. Hill?'

'No! *what?*' we cried in a breath.

'Didn't you get a French play from a friend of yours in Paris for her, Vicomte?' asked Freddy.

'*Mon Dieu!* yes. It cost me a pots of money,' returned the Frenchman.

'Just so!' said Freddy coolly. 'And she has translated it, hasn't she, Clarence?'

'Yes: and I have worried every manager in London to produce it.'

'Then you are both philanthropists, and I admire you, and there is no reason why your disinterested labours should cease: only let me tell you that Mrs. Hill has returned to her husband.'

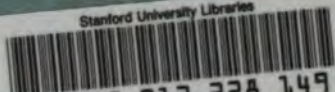
'Her husband!'

'Yes: she wasn't divorced. You were wrong, Clarence; there was only a judicial separation. A month ago Captain Hill came into eight thou' a year; a week after, he had a spill out hunting, and broke his leg. His wife heard the news, took the first steamer to Ireland, and nursed him. They are now more loving than ever.'

I said nothing—I am accustomed to blows of this kind. Mr. Clarence puffed his cigar and looked like swearing. Le Vicomte turned to me.

'Ah! *mon cher*, I told you—is it not? Madame is *chic*; and, by Dickens! she knows her way about.'

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